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HALF-HOURS
OF
BLIND MAN'S HOLIDAY.



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OF
BLIND MAN'S HOLIDAY.

LONDON:

ROBSON AND SONS, PRINTERS, PANCRAE ROAD, N.W

HALF-HOURS
OF
BLIND MAN'S HOLIDAY

Or Summer and Winter Sketches

IN

BLACK AND WHITE

By W. W. FENN

'Those also serve who only stand and wait'

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.



LONDON

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON

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As a few years have elapsed since many of the following articles were written, some details here and there may be a little out of date ; but it has been thought better to let them stand unaltered, as, in the main, they do not affect the subject dealt with.

HALF-HOURS OF BLIND MAN'S HOLIDAY.

CHRISTMAS-EVE AT LONETHORPE MANOR.

INTRODUCTION.

THAT old uncle of mine, Peter Greystore, with his quaint antiquarian tastes and numerous hobbies, possessed a museum, which would have done honour to any provincial town, containing, amidst many other curiosities, a vast number of coins of great worth ; but its chief feature in point of value was a really magnificent collection of uncut diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and all sorts of precious stones.

Amongst various eccentric propensities, he had one for living in an old-fashioned country house ; and, when an unexpected accession of fortune placed such a residence within his reach, he purchased what I have no doubt he called 'A glorious old place, sir !' with ivied towers, oriel windows, huge fireplaces, and winding mysterious passages cutting off corners from many a

snuggery, whilst its dark passages, winding stairs, leading to unexpected rooms, and, by circuitous routes, bringing you back to the gallery whence you started, made it supremely difficult to find your way about the interior, even after a considerable acquaintance with it.

Lonethorpe Manor, as the place was called, was situated in one of the most out-of-the-way parts of the county of Marlingshire, and possessed, with other attractions, in my uncle's eyes, the reputation of being haunted, and thither, some years before I was born, he removed from London with his family and all his belongings, of course including the far-famed museum. The house had, for a considerable period, been uninhabited, and had gradually fallen into a state of dilapidation, owing partly to its evil reputation and the impecuniosity of its former owner. To restore it in truly mediæval fashion was one of the delights my uncle promised himself. But, as all its appointments were to be thoroughly appropriate, and in accordance with the various periods at which it had been built and added to, this was naturally a work of some time ; and, I believe, for many years after he went to live there, portions of it remained in the most unfurnished and uninhabitable condition.

I never knew the place until after his death, which happened just before I came of age, and when I found myself not only the inheritor of house and land, but also of all the worthy old gentleman's possessions. He had outlived his wife and children, and never having

made a will, I, then an orphan, was declared his next of kin.

Having no fancy myself for living in such an abode, so completely out of the world, I made arrangements to dispose of it, with its contents, immediately I attained my majority. On that memorable birthday, amongst the many tokens of good-will and kind wishes which reached me from my friends, was a certain mysterious box of no great size, but of considerable weight, locked, clasped, and sealed so effectually as to render inspection of its contents impossible, except by the exercise of force. It was addressed to me, and accompanied by a short note, in an unsteady hand, to this effect :

‘London, March 6, 1836.

‘Dear Sir,—You have probably never heard of my name, but in former years I was the bosom friend of your aunt and uncle Greystore. The contents of the box, which I send with this letter, belong to you as inheritor of Lonethorpe Manor; but I conjure you, by the respect in which you hold your good uncle’s memory, on no account to open it till I am no more. I am a very old woman now, and you will not have long to wait; and, were it not that I wished to show my respect for you as Peter Greystore’s heir on this day of all others, I should have withheld the box until my death. As it is, I intrust it to you, feeling sure that I can rely implicitly on the honour of any one bearing the revered name of Greystore, and that my wishes, however weak and foolish, will be complied with.

out doubted whether the society of my friend, Mrs. Greystore, and the Christmas festivities of her house, would not rather jar than otherwise upon my feelings. The journey, too, was dreary enough ; but about three o'clock in the afternoon I was glad to see that we were approaching a larger town than any we had yet passed through. The guard wound his horn merrily, and the coachman mended his pace as we rattled over the stones of the suburbs, and pulled up smartly in front of an old-fashioned inn. This was Marlingford, whence we were to go on to Lonethorpe in a postchaise.

After we had alighted and the London coach was again on its way I ordered my conveyance, and walked up and down the courtyard of the inn, glad to stretch my cramped limbs. Whilst doing so I overheard the old ostler say to the weather-beaten postillion, as they were putting my horses to, 'that he would have but a bad ride of it. For his part, he didn't see why gentry couldn't just be content to live in good towns, instead of out-of-the-way places where there wasn't a decent road within miles. A fashious job for the cattle was a journey to Lonethorpe even in summer ; but now that the frost had just broke up it was wild work, and not partic'lar safe either, he thought. He had heard as one or two travellers had been stopped lately up about that place. However, that was the gentry's own lookout. Postboys never come to no harm so long as they was quiet.'

Really there was much truth in the man's remarks. A more dreary evening to travel on could not well be

had recently purchased, which entirely fulfilled, they said, their own notions of a rural residence.

I was entreated to go down and make one of the small party expected to assemble at Christmas for a house-warming, when I might judge for myself whether the place was not most romantically gloomy, and yet most comfortably habitable.

After some prolonged correspondence it was agreed I should leave London the day before Christmas-day with my maid, an old retainer, who, though loving and faithful, tyrannised over me, by right of long service and a close intimacy with my family troubles. So, under the orders of old Ellis, at six o'clock on a chill foggy morning we drove in one of the rattling hackney-coaches which, with sedan-chairs, in those days were our only metropolitan public conveyances, to the Peacock at Islington, whence we took the stage-coach bound for the county town of Marlingford.

The bustle of the start over, I was at first interested in watching the incoming night-mails, as, meeting us on the great north road, they dashed by with flickering lamps and steaming horses to the cheery music of their guards' horns; but by the time we had passed Highgate I had relapsed into the melancholy mood that had of late oppressed me, and to dissipate which in some degree my friends had urged that I should visit them, even at this inclement season of the year.

My mind was full of the one great sorrow which had made me the lonely woman I was, and I had through-

out doubted whether the society of my friend, Mrs. Greystore, and the Christmas festivities of her house, would not rather jar than otherwise upon my feelings. The journey, too, was dreary enough; but about three o'clock in the afternoon I was glad to see that we were approaching a larger town than any we had yet passed through. The guard wound his horn merrily, and the coachman mended his pace as we rattled over the stones of the suburbs, and pulled up smartly in front of an old-fashioned inn. This was Marlingford, whence we were to go on to Lonethorpe in a postchaise.

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Really there was much truth in the man's remarks. A more dreary evening to travel on could not well be

imagined, and his reference to the possibility of robbery was by no means reassuring. Yet I was but little influenced by the idea of such perils; and as Ellis had not overheard this colloquy, I determined to keep it to myself.

Looking up the High-street, bright fires shone through many a window, but by the time we drove away blinds and curtains were being drawn down, to shut out the desolate prospect, and I pictured to myself many a cosy family group gathering round the cheerful blaze, glad to be safely housed ere the short twilight of this Christmas-eve deepened into night. The streets we soon left behind, and the high-road was gained. A few farm teams, returning from what labours in the fields the season permitted, passed us; then came the only cheering sound we were to hear for some time—the tinkling bells of the slow-going long-stage wagon, with swinging lamp already lighted. Our postillion nodded to the driver, who called out it was ‘a rough night;’ and with him and his lumbering vehicle passed away the last signs of life.

The road lay up a long hill, over which we slowly crawled, exposed to the full fury of the wind, that howled and moaned piteously. The gaunt naked branches of the few trees we saw were twisted and bent, and swayed hither and thither with a strangely spectral motion. Ragged clouds drifted over the wild lowering sky, a thin drizzling rain fell as the wintry day drew to its close, and no living thing was to be seen except a few rooks, whose croaking voices blended well with the

mournful sighing of the wind as they wended their solemn flight to their homes.

About four miles from the town we came to some cross-roads, where stood a gibbet and chains, in which hung the bleaching bones of some wretched criminal,—a sight by no means uncommon in the days of which I speak, when capital punishment was awarded to many a crime besides that of murder. A little farther on we turned off the highway into a narrow lane, singularly uncared for and dreary, which was of course in a worse condition than the road we had quitted. So strangely unused and neglected did it appear, that I could not resist letting down the glass and asking the man if he was certain he knew his way.

‘O, yes, never fear; but to be sure it is the worst bit o’ road in all the county.’

Such a piercing blast whistled through the open window, that I was glad to draw in my head and wrap my fur cloak round me. Soon after this it grew quite dark, and poor Ellis broke out into the most dismal forebodings; and just in the midst of one of her querulous lamentations I was startled by hearing horses’ hoofs behind us. I had hardly time to realise this unexpected sound when two riders galloped past, and in another instant the carriage was brought to a standstill. There was an altercation in threatening tones with the postboy, when the foremost horseman, returning to the coach-door, seized one of our lamps, wrenching it from its socket. As he did so the light fell full upon him, and I saw that he was masked. Then he

thrust a pistol in at the window, which I had just lowered, saying, in a hoarse guttural sort of a whisper, 'Now, then, your watch and purse! Whatever you have about you, give it up quickly, and no—'

He did not finish the sentence, for at that moment the light he held in his left hand shone straight into my eyes, and he drew back as if appalled. Uttering an oath, he wheeled his horse round to where his companion was holding the postboy in check, and exclaiming,

'Ride on, Tom, ride on! this won't do,' the two dashed away into the darkness.

The presence of mind which enabled me to observe and fix in my memory these details was now entirely gone. I have but the most confused recollection of anything that happened afterwards, until I found myself, an hour later, in the midst of my friends at Lonethorpe. Their warm welcome, hospitable solicitude, and anxiety for my welfare, however, only partially restored me to myself. The account which I gave of the attack by the highwayman, and the sudden and mysterious manner in which he abandoned his purpose of robbery, was listened to with profound interest. Every one was amazed at his forbearance, and utterly puzzled how to account for it; yet, oddly enough, so was not I. Somehow I felt no surprise on this point. That he should, under such favourable circumstances, have failed to carry out his intentions was undoubtedly very remarkable. What influenced him, or what so suddenly arrested his purpose, it was impossible to say;

but I can only repeat I was not astonished at it. Ah, me! had I then known what I afterwards knew, there would have been no difficulty in explaining the contradictory feeling which had taken possession of me—the strange sensation of no surprise at a most surprising event.

When the excitement of my arrival had subsided, the staid but hearty greeting of Mr. Greystore and the ardently-affectionate embrace of his wife soothed and comforted me. The aspect of the oak-panelled dining-room, with its blazing fire of huge logs, shining brightly and cheerily on the polished walls and floors, also tended to counteract the disagreeable influence of the day's journey.

We were not a large party, and I need not stop to describe the dear friends of my earlier days; they have long since passed away; and, although you were not born then, you are the sole remaining link that binds me to that time. There were to be some juvenile festivities in honour of Christmas-eve; but, in consideration of the fatigue and terror I had undergone, I was to be excused from joining in them. I was therefore shown early to my room, a good night's rest being prescribed as the surest restorative. So, my hostess leading the way across the hall, we ascended a staircase with a broad low oak balustrade terminating in a landing, from which opened many rooms. Passing straight along this to the end, we turned up another short flight of stairs, then descended two or three steps, which brought us to an anteroom with a curious groined roof,

and walls of such thickness it would have been impossible to stretch hand and arm out of the windows sunk in their depths.

We were now, I was told, in the tower at the east end of the house, the oldest part of the mansion. Beyond this lay, at right angles with the frontage, a wing containing some rooms of the same date as the tower, long disused, but of such ample proportion and commanding such fine views of the park, that Mr. Grey-store had resolved to restore and furnish them in a thoroughly antique fashion, and make of them the guest-chambers. Only one was at present completed, and 'You, Isabel,' said my friend, 'are to be the first occupant of our state apartment.'

Nervous as I then was, I must confess I would rather have declined the honour, and taken a room nearer to the nurseries, and I have sometimes wondered at the thoughtlessness of my hostess in selecting such a remote chamber for me, under the circumstances.

The room into which I was ushered was of oblong form and hung with tapestry; another bright fire of great logs burned briskly upon the hearth; candles were lighted in old-fashioned sconces, and Ellis, neat and trim, stood beside open boxes all ready to attend upon me. Hardly had the door closed upon Mrs. Greystore's affectionate 'Good-night!' to me and her caution to Ellis not to lose her way, than that abigail exclaimed,

'Not lose my way, indeed! Who could help it, I should like to know? I never saw such a rambling

place, not I! Just look, ma'am, at all these windows and doors! How is one to keep out the draught? And the flame of the candles too! Didn't I say 'twould be so?'

As this was an evil that might possibly be remedied, I looked round to see from which window (there were three) the draught that made the light so unsteady came. Two were of ordinary size and seemed shut closely, but the third was a French casement opening down to the floor, and, like the others, had looped-up curtains. As I put my hand up to try the fastening, the sash fell back, admitting, with a whirl and dash, such a blast that the embers from the fire were scattered on the floor and the lights all but extinguished. Starting back scared, but instantly recovering myself, I pushed it hastily to, quite ready to echo Ellis's complaints on the carelessness of the servants, who, on such a night, left windows insecurely fastened.

Looking out, I dimly discerned that a long flight of stone steps, apparently disused and broken, led from a little terrace, or balcony, in front of the window down to the park. We commented on so unusual and unpleasant an arrangement as such means of access from without to a bedchamber afforded; and I felt truly glad to find heavy shutters, which we immediately closed. It was, of course, too dark to see many yards, but I was sure we were surrounded by trees, from the sharp crackling raps with which the bare branches were now and again dashed against the glass. Annoyed by the careless neglect of the window-fastening, I made

a very special survey of the room and furniture. Just facing the foot of the huge four-post bed, with its masses of heavy dark curtains, under which Ellis timidly peered, was an oak-panelled door, partially revealed by imperfect joining of the tapestry that elsewhere went all round the room. This we opened, and, peeping in, merely discovered a very deep recess sunk in the thickness of the walls. It appeared to be a sort of lumber-closet, and contained nothing that we could see but a few boxes and some odd pieces of furniture pushed to the far end. The door had once fitted neatly into the rough panelling of the wall, so as to be imperceptible; but now, warped upon its hinges by age, it would not shut quite close. We next proceeded to reconnoitre the heavy wardrobe and straight-backed massive chairs that looked more fit for show than comfort. I had hoped to hear that Ellis's room lay near mine, but on asking the question she grimly shook her head and said,

‘Near! O, no; not nearer than half a mile. To be sure, here's a bell; but who knows where it rings to? and you might call for an hour before any one would hear you from such an out-of-the-way corner.’

Well, it was now too late—or, rather, my pride would not allow me—to object to the loneliness of my chamber; so, turning to the old-fashioned draped mirror above the quaint-looking toilet-table, I prepared to undress, hoping that my unusual timidity would vanish when I had by habit reconciled myself to my grand solitude. Ellis's want of tact, however, in con-

tinuing to impress upon me the distance by which I was separated from the rest of the household, and the difficulty of communicating with her, counteracted my good resolutions, and by the time I was ready to get into bed I thought the place looked more dreary than ever.

The fire being replenished, and I safely ensconced in a bed whose tester rose as high as the ceiling, there was no longer any excuse for my retaining Ellis, much as I dreaded being left alone; so she bade me 'Good-night' in a boding tone, and, stalking sullenly to the door, said,

'I shall lock this on the outside, and take the key away; I must keep you as safe as locks can make you. And I don't mean to call you till late, for I am sure you want a good night's rest.'

Finding remonstrance useless, I at last consented to let her have her way, but as she turned the key on the outside I felt a horrible dread of being locked up in so lonely a situation. How lonely it was I had not realised until the good woman's receding footsteps fell on my ear. Then came deep silence for a moment or two, during which I could hear nothing but the beating of my heart. A sudden whirl of branches against the windows, and a long furious howl of wind down the chimney, seemed a relief from the appalling quiet; but as the gale died away the sound was so unearthly in its wailing sobs that I felt my flesh creep as I listened to catch its last echoes. I tried to reason with myself on my folly, but no strength to reason was left; the sleep

that would have been so welcome, and that was my due, would not come to my pillow, court it as I would. I felt compelled to concentrate all my powers in an effort to combat a foreboding that something horrible was to happen, that something awful would break the stillness that succeeded the wintry gust.

On the left of the bed were the two ordinary windows and the entrance-door, on the right the fireplace, and parallel with my bed, still on the right, the large casement which had been blown open. Immediately facing me was the cupboard, plainly visible, as the curtains, although closely drawn on both sides of my couch, were partially open at the foot. The fire was burning low, the soft flaky sound of the ashes as they fell upon the hearth began at last to soothe and lull me. I lay idly watching the grotesque shadows cast by the perforated rushlight-shade as they danced and flickered upon the panel opposite ; a drowsiness was stealing over me which would have ripened into sleep but that suddenly a return of my old anxiety was induced by the idea, which brought a gasp into my throat, that I heard voices whispering not far off. In a moment I was wide awake and sitting upright in bed ; but a wild gust of wind just then frustrated all my efforts to listen, and for some time I was kept in horrible suspense. As the blast died away I strained my ears to cracking, and surely I did hear voices from the direction of the cupboard ; but before I could verify my dread the wind again drowned every sound, and though sinking back upon my pillow half dead with terror, I still kept my eyes fixed upon

the door. It moved ! Yes, of a certainty it moved ! Hardly knowing what I did, or with what intention, I sprang out of bed and wrapped myself round in one of the ample curtains at its foot, clinging the while with a convulsive grasp to the bed-post, but never for so much as a second losing sight of the door. It again slowly moved, and this time a hand crept round its edge. Once more the whispering, and now quite audible to my preternaturally sharpened faculties.

'S'death, you fool !' said a husky voice, 'there is no one in the room. People don't come to bed at nine o'clock on Christmas-eve. Young and old alike are down below enjoying themselves ; you'll be able to pass out as you passed in.'

'But suppose,' interrupted a second speaker, 'they've fastened the window while we've been on the job ? You should have made Tom stop and watch.'

'A likely game !' chimed in a third ; 'if I had watched and found, I must have made short work of it ; and our captain here swore there must be no blood, or he'd have it again from who ever drew it.'

'Stow this gabble,' again interrupted the first voice. 'Tom, go first ; make sure there's no one in the bed, and then fasten the door ; open the window, and we'll follow with the swag.'

My heart stood still ; cold perspiration poured from my forehead. I felt turned to stone, as, watching from my hiding-place, I saw a man slowly emerge from the recess. He wore a common riding-dress, and his tread was muffled by short hose pulled over his high boots.

He stood within a foot of me as he cast a hurried glance into the bed. Seemingly convinced that there was no one there, he moved with less caution, and all but pushed against me as he walked round to the door.

‘Ha, ha!’ he muttered; ‘locked outside, eh! They’ve been up here and made all safe, as they think. Fastened up the window too, no doubt. Never mind; come out, boys; we’ll soon be clear of it now.’ And in another second he was unbarring the shutter of the long casement.

The door of the recess now stood wide open. One of the two men within was lifting on to his shoulders a small but heavy valise, strapped to which was a leathern bag. His companion, who had his back towards me, was helping him. The burden adjusted, he who carried it stole across, also with muffled feet, to the now open window, where the thief who had first appeared relieved him of part of the load, and the two passed out on to the balcony. The rush of wind admitted by the casement caused the fire to blaze brightly up, and its embers whirled about the hearth. While I had been breathlessly watching these proceedings, the one man now left in the room had gone over to the toilet-table, where he was rapidly despoiling my dressing-case and putting various ornaments and jewels hastily into his pockets. But his back was still towards me, and he stooped over the table, too low for the mirror to reflect his face. Suddenly he started, as if in terrified amazement, and, standing upright, turned

round to examine by the firelight something he held in his hand.

O God ! shall I ever forget my feelings as his features were thus revealed to me ? Can you who read my story guess why, in that dread moment, I experienced the greatest revulsion of feeling that can possibly be conceived ? Can you guess why my terror was instantly transformed into the utmost fearlessness and courage ? Why, with every possible sensation of horror and misery still upon me, I felt an overwhelming joy ? And can you anticipate why, as he was about to quit the room and thus relieve me, as it would have seemed, of all further apprehension, I, with a wild moaning sob, rushed from my hiding-place, and threw myself at his feet ? Because, in one word, he was my son !

Yes ; my self-willed, wayward, unhappy son, of whose fate for the past two years I had been in such miserable ignorance, and whom, under such circumstances as these, I had at last found, the associate and apparent leader of a gang of thieves and burglars, committing a fearful crime, for which, were he discovered, his life would pay the forfeit ! Committing a crime redoubled in its atrocity, since he was robbing the very man by whom, as a lad, he had been treated with an almost parental love and affection ! Taking advantage, doubtless, of his intimate acquaintance with the peculiar and valuable property of Mr. Greystore to possess himself of it, like the ungrateful and thankless thief that he was !

I thought that to know of his wild and reckless courses since his father's death, whilst still under my roof, had been misery sufficient. I thought when, in a burst of unusually ungovernable and furious temper, he had left his home and gone no one knew whither, baffling all pursuit and eluding every attempt made to discover him, my cup of bitterness was full. I thought that, as the days passed by and month succeeded month, and still no traces of him appeared, and that a belief in his death was all that was left to me—I say that all this terrible suspense and grief was as nothing compared to the agony of heart which I endured at the moment when I saw him standing erect in the firelight of my lonely room. I wonder how I am able even to recount the misery of that hour, as, struggling with him in his efforts to disengage himself from my grasp, I eventually succeeded in calming him and inducing him to listen to me.

I have but the most confused remembrance of how, when I first sprang towards him, he started, as though he had seen a ghost, drew back, threw up his arms, and exclaimed, 'Again—a second time to-night! What devilish fate is pursuing me? Why have you thus crossed my path twice within a few hours? How came you here? or are you but some infernal presentment of my mother sent to daunt me when I should be firmest? But do not think to stay me; cease your ghostly pranks, and let me pass!'

I know not in what words I besought and adjured him to keep quiet; how, in every way, I strove to pacify

him and assure him of my identity; to point out to him that if ever the hand of Providence had interposed to save him from utter destruction I was its instrument, and that now, if he did not listen to my prayer, he would be lost for ever; how I strove to keep him quiet and make him, in his perplexed excitement, subdue his voice, lest, even at that distance from the rest of the household, he might be overheard; how he wavered—now seeming to listen, softened by my words and embraces, now forcing me from him for a while, and struggling to escape by the window; and how, by degrees, taking advantage of his gentler moods, I at last induced him to reclose the shutters, and eventually to sit quietly down; whilst I, kneeling at his feet, hid my face on his bosom and wept as if my heart were breaking.

I only remember that there, in the dead of night, we two sat communing—mother and son—not only literally but morally alike cut off from the rest of the world—I by my agony, and he by his crime!

I will not dwell more than is necessary upon this extraordinary and terrible scene, unparalleled in its pain and wretchedness.

Little by little I induced him to tell me some of the details of his recent mode of life. Awful as they were for a mother to hear, I felt that by confession some ground at least might be gained. I need not repeat his history. Step by step from bad to worse, of course, down he went, until by accident he found himself in the neighbourhood of Lonethorpe, then unoccu-

pied and deserted. He and his companions in crime for a while had secretly made it their head-quarters, and by its aid often eluding the ends of justice, making use of certain ingenious contrivances to keep alive the belief already rife in the neighbourhood that the place was haunted. They had well explored all its mysterious labyrinth of passages and maze of underground chambers and retreats. Here, indeed, they all but lived, carousing over the result of their depredations upon the highway. When the house was purchased by Mr. Greystore, and signs were made of an intention to occupy it, my unhappy son and his band (for he, in virtue of his superior education, had been constituted its leader) were obliged to beat a retreat. No sooner, however, he told me, did he learn Mr. Greystore was coming to reside at Lonethorpe than the idea of plundering his kind friend of his large collection of valuable uncut jewels and stones occurred to him.

I gathered from his broken and excited words, as I forced them almost one by one from him, that, by cunningly-conducted inquiries made of the servants, and by frequenting an alehouse in Marlingford, he ascertained the general habits of the family, and which room had been converted into a museum. His intimate acquaintance with the house enabled him at once to understand how a disused, and probably unknown, secret passage and stair led from the back of the closet in my room down to a sliding panel in the very apartment used by Mr. Greystore as a repository for his antiquities and valuables. The largest and oldest of

the basement rooms, it lay at the back of the building, strongly barred and secured. These facts were but just gleaned, and it was thought that Christmas festivities would secure the robbers from all interruption.

My occupation of the hitherto disused room threw an unexpected difficulty in the way; but, bold and determined as were the burglars, they defied it, and finding no one in the chamber as they inspected it by the firelight through the incautiously-unshuttered and loosely-fastened window, they slipped in and reached the cupboard, probably only a few minutes before Ellis went to unpack my boxes. Once in undisturbed possession of the museum (for it was rightly calculated that the children's party occupied the whole attention of the household), my miserable wicked boy was able deliberately to pillage the place of its most valuable contents, with which he was well acquainted.

All that followed I myself had seen; but, as he finished the confession of his guilt, he appeared more overcome than he had hitherto been. He looked at me, with tears in his eyes, and his still handsome features, marred and altered though they were by exposure and dissipation, were lighted up with something of the old expression that had been my joy and happiness to watch when he prattled at my knee.

'Mother,' he said, in a voice changed utterly from what it used to be, but which struck familiarly on my ear, 'I have little more to tell; you know nearly the worst now. Yet, not quite; for though these hands have hitherto been guiltless of blood, I might to-night,

but for the merest chance, have shed yours ! Yes, mother ; for I at least threatened it ; and had your carriage-lamp been less bright, or had your face been muffled, who knows what my recklessness would have brought about !

‘ Ah, Wilfred, Wilfred ! ’ I cried, ‘ the masked highwayman ! I understand it all ! O my poor boy, how can I ever pray for you enough ? ’

‘ As I saw,’ he continued, ‘ whom Fate or the fiend had thrown in my way I could not believe my eyes ; you of all people were farthest from my thoughts, and, as I rode off, I fancied I had seen a ghost, and cursed myself for a blockhead at being so unnerved. But to-night, just now, when at that table I chanced upon this picture of my dead father, which I have so often seen hanging around your neck, I was appalled, and again conceived that it was some supernatural influence, directed by you to make me falter in my purpose, nor, at first, even when you threw yourself at my feet, could I believe in your identity. However, let me keep this,’ he added, placing the miniature in the breast-pocket of his weather-stained riding-coat. Then rising, and somewhat resuming his hardened tone, ‘ If this be the last time we ever meet, remember these words of mine. I cannot promise much ; but I have been pulled up—I have had a lesson ; it may do me some good, and it may not. Who knows ? I must be far away from here before daybreak. I shall find those scoundrels at our rendezvous ; and such of the plunder as their cursed fingers leave for my share I swear to

you I will restore. Take its restoration as the only proof I can give you of my repentance. I shall probably leave the country, and if in after years I ever retrieve my good name, you shall see me; if not, another, farewell! farewell for ever!' And, pressing his lips upon my forehead as I sat helpless and stunned, in another moment he was out upon the balcony, and whilst the firelight from within yet glimmered on his figure as he passed out of the window and descended the steps, I lost all consciousness, and fell in a swoon upon the floor.

Dawn was breaking as the chill air from the open window began to revive me. After the suffering I had endured, I marvel to think how my presence of mind returned sufficiently to enable me to hide every trace of the scene which had been enacted. I did this, however, effectually, but not till it had cost me all my remaining strength. And when Ellis came into the room some two hours later, she found me in bed delirious, and with a raging fever.

Days passed, with only a few intervals of consciousness, so short in their duration that an indistinct terror of betraying myself in some way is all that I remember of that time. At last, when the tender care bestowed upon me had restored me in a degree, and a full recollection of everything that had passed returned, I was thankful to find that my fears were groundless. I had been perfectly silent; and, as soon as the doctor per-

mitted me to indulge in conversation, I was able to glean that my illness was attributed entirely to over-fatigue, and the shock I had sustained on my journey. More than a week elapsed after Christmas-day before the robbery was discovered. My illness, and the check which it put upon the Christmas merriment, had so occupied Mr. Greystore, that he had not once entered his museum. His consternation, and that, indeed, of the whole household, was of course very great when he found his treasure gone; and the utter inability to gather the least clue to the way in which he had been despoiled added considerably to the excitement. There was no evidence of a violent entry into the room having been made; its contents were comparatively undisturbed. Little had been touched, except such articles as were of more than mere archæological worth; but the cases and drawers containing the vast number of gold and silver coins, and, above all, the priceless collection of uncut precious stones, were completely emptied, showing, as Mr. Greystore said, an intimate knowledge on the part of the thieves of every nook and corner in which treasure would be found.

Notwithstanding the minutest search, not a trace was left of how admission to the museum had been gained. No scratch or crack upon its panelled walls helped in their search the somewhat dull-eyed officers of justice (for those were not the days of detectives) who had been sent for especially from London. The country-side rang with accounts of the mysterious affair, which was by the majority of people attributed to the

spiritual influences said to be at work in the lonely old house. However, nothing led to the apprehension of any one, even on suspicion, though the neighbourhood was known to abound with many bad characters; and after a long while my friend was fain to put up with his loss with the best philosophy he could muster.

I need not, I think, attempt to describe, even if it were possible, my conflicting feelings as I listened distracted, day by day, to the recital of these things. What could I do, knowing what I knew, and feeling what I felt? Nothing but to assume, in the presence of my friends, an air of extreme wonderment, anxiety, and interest, and to weep my heart out in prayer when alone. I prayed that time might restore my good friend's much-valued property, and bring to me the fulfilment of the promise that my guilty son had made. His last words rang in my ear: 'Take its restoration as the only proof I can give you of my repentance.'

I have little more to tell. Many months passed, and I was back again in my own home, a broken-hearted miserable woman, looking ten years older than when I left it on that awful Christmas-eve. My hair had turned as white as snow, and I wonder I did not die. Anxiously, O, how anxiously I cannot express, did I look for tidings of the lost property. If it ever was restored, I might at least take some little comfort to my heart in the belief that Wilfred had been as good as his word, and that, failing any proof to the contrary, I might accept it as an earnest of his changed life. This consolation, at least, was not denied me; but it came in such a way as still to

prevent a restitution of the treasure to its owner. At intervals packages were left at my house, by a messenger whom I failed to trace, containing parts of it; and in the course of a year or more I believe it had been nearly all returned to me—to me, instead of to Mr. Greystore. How could I forward it to my friend? how could I account for its passing through *my* hands?

I hesitated how to act; I hoped that chance might aid me in some way. At any rate—may God forgive me if I did wrong!—I felt that my friend had better put up with his loss than that any act of mine should, however indirectly, lead to the discovery of my son's iniquity. Thus all I did was to obtain, by dint of casual inquiry, a catalogue of the articles stolen, and, by comparing it with the jewels and coins received by me, ascertain if anything, and what, was still missing. So I learnt that, with the exception of four gold pieces of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and a little packet of uncut rubies, the restitution was complete; but these latter I never received—no, nor any further tidings of my son for nearly ten years.

Hope was deferred until it paled and paled, and my settled heart-sickness knew no abatement until the news was brought to me of Wilfred's death. He had formed one of a party of emigrants from Holland, bound for Van Diemen's Land, then just being established as a colony, and, when nearing the port, he fell overboard and was drowned. Having sailed in his own name, his few effects were sent to me, by reason that, amongst them, a miniature with my name and address at the

back gave at once the only and the safest clue to his connections.

I never knew any particulars of his reformation, if it ever took place; but my faith teaches me that God in His mercy had sown the seeds of repentance and yearnings after good in his heart, and, when they began to bear fruit, took him to his rest, far away from further temptation.

The news of Wilfred's death again set me vacillating as to what course I might now pursue with regard to Mr. Greystore's treasure, of which I had all this while been in unlawful possession, when his decease relieved me of my perplexity. I say relieved me; for you, then becoming his sole heir, might at least, I thought, wait till I too had passed away. Thus I determined to write this history of my sorrowful secret, praying that its nature, together with the restitution of your property, though tardy, will enable you to look with forgiveness upon the part which the weakness of my moral courage and strength of my natural affections compelled me to play.

ISABEL FABER.

CONCLUSION.

Here, indeed, was something like a birthday present; for it must not be forgotten that the poor old lady had sent it to me on my coming of age. It turned out indeed to be a second little fortune which I had inherited; yet whilst I sat examining the contents of this casket of jewels, their value seemed to pale and

die away as I thought over the painful narrative I had just read.

Then a vague recollection crept over me of having, as a child, heard something of a mysterious robbery at my uncle's house, a robbery that was attributed to ghosts.

And had this secret passage, this clue to the whole extraordinary disappearance of the treasure, never been discovered? never opened perhaps since that terrible night thus described to me by the suffering miserable mother? Probably not. To ascertain this I took the earliest opportunity of going down into Marlingshire, and explaining to the present owner of Lonethorpe the object of my visit.

The old room, once the museum, presented no sign of sliding panel or secret entrance, tap or examine the wall as we might.

The closet in Mrs. Faber's bedroom likewise gave no sign at first of any means of egress; but a little examination disclosed, in one corner of the floor, a small trapdoor, which, when we had opened it with great difficulty, gave upon a flight of steep wooden stairs. Clearly many years had passed since it had been disturbed, and much caution had to be exercised, so decayed and shaky were the steps. The lantern which I carried—for the place was pitch-dark—showed a winding and descending passage, built cunningly in the thickness of the wall. At the end of this molelike burrow, and fitted into some wood-work, was a huge metal knob or handle, which, after wrenching and twist-

ing and pushing and screwing in various directions, at last began slowly to act as a lever upon the heavy panelling, which we were thus enabled to slide into a cavity, and lo! we found ourselves passing into the museum by a narrow doorway.

Then only could we understand this most ingenious contrivance. On retracing our steps I saw something sparkle on the floor. Stooping down, I picked up a coin; yes, and eventually three more, as well as the packet of uncut rubies, which, of course, the thieves had dropped on their return with the plunder. Thus the restitution was complete, my valuable and now doubly curious collection unimpaired, and Peter Grey-store's hobby, I trust, finds no unworthy stable in my present abode.

WHAT BECOMES OF THE PICTURES?

As we plunge into the season of picture-exhibitions and find ourselves travelling through the galleries, over acres of canvas and paper, catalogue and pencil in hand—noting, criticising, admiring, or condemning as we go—we, whether art-students or not, being of a speculative turn of mind, cannot fail to wonder what is the ultimate destination of all this paint and patience. Whilst society is torn by discussion and contention regarding the merits and demerits of the Royal Academy and the Water-colours; whilst the critics are fighting, and the artists writhing under their lash, it seems almost impossible that this great enigma has not suggested itself even to the least speculative intellect.

Secretly, involuntarily perhaps, it must have occurred to every one of us; secretly we have all asked ourselves the question, ‘What becomes of the pictures?’ But hitherto, as far as I am aware, it has never been publicly propounded.

In the hope, therefore, that by drawing the attention of the learned, the inquisitive, or the scientific to the matter, a satisfactory answer may somehow be obtained, I am impelled to proceed with the inquiry,

step by step, until I have unfolded each of its remarkable items.

‘What becomes of the pictures?’ Where do they go? What is done with them? Who owns them? Where are they hidden? And how is it that after an exhibition is shut we never see them again?

Fortunate as, in some instances, this fact may be for us, it does not render the question less curious. The doctrine of chance may have something to do with it, but it cannot so continually militate against us as satisfactorily to account for it. Again, it is clear that the majority of pictures cannot be treated like the majority of modern books — they cannot find their way to the cheesemonger or trunkmaker; and lightly thought of and unprofitable as many of them deservedly may be, still, they are generally too substantial in bulk to be thus easily disposed of and utilised like the ephemeral literature of the day.

Again, although many pictures are only fitted by their quality to swing in the front of the Spotted Dog or the Blue Pig; and although our great David Cox did contribute a sketch in oil of a noble oak-tree as a sign for that great head-quarters of the landscape-painter, the Royal Oak at Bettws-y-Coed, — the sketch, I believe, hangs there to this day; — still, there can be comparatively few absorbed by the licensed-victualling fraternity for signboard purposes, or we should more frequently recognise some of our old friends.

Once more, although it is upon record that an

artist, being very hard up and in very bad case, took a freshly-painted head of Apollo off its stretcher and turned it into a new back for his waistcoat on the occasion of a *fête* in Rome, so that when he doffed his coat for the easier enjoyment of the dance he was more beautiful to gaze upon from the rear than the front, this circumstance is not sufficient proof that our great tailors rely upon portrait-painters for the supply of waistcoat-backs. No ; considering the amount of so-called pictorial art produced in this country season by season, and considering how utterly it disappears from public gaze, we are justified in pronouncing that 'What becomes of the pictures?' is a deep inscrutable enigma.

Of all the numerous mysteries by which art is surrounded, and which cling to the skirts of the divine Minerva, there are none of more gigantic magnitude, or any more difficult of solution, than this.


It is easy enough to learn the destination of the two or three, or, at the most, half dozen, startling works of real genius which may be produced upon our English easels during the year. Indeed, in many ways the fortunate owners of such pictures receive a sort of reflected lustre from the canvases themselves.

If the paintings are engraved, the superscription, after the 'artist's proofs before letters' are struck off, runs thus : 'From the celebrated picture by Strontian, R.A., in the possession of Septimus Tunnmarsh, Esq. ;' and at once the two names, representatives of genius and wealth, are linked together.

Further than this, at the private view of the Royal Academy, or elsewhere, you are sure to meet Chaffinch, that eminent *dilettante* who prides himself on knowing everybody and everybody's business, and who, on coming up to you, says: 'Did you see the man I have just been talking to? That's the fellow who bought Strontian's picture—"The Recompense"—gave him five thousand for it. There! that's the man; that's Tunnmash, the great brewer; rich as Cræsus; got a first-class collection. I was dining with him last week, and I really don't think he has a bad picture on his walls. Capital investment, too; and whenever that fit of apoplexy, which he seems always on the point of having, *does* take him, why, bless my heart! everything he has in those rooms will fetch fifty per cent more than he gave for them, simply from their all being first rate. The one helps the other; force of good company, you know; acts on pictures as it does on men.'

Then the voluble Chaffinch rapidly details the names of some of the chief features of Tunnmash's gallery; and naturally *you*, taking an interest in art, recollect most of the works enumerated as gems not easily forgotten.

So, at any rate, you know what has become of them, though the chances are you never see them again. Very likely you push through the crowd, and have another look at Tunnmash. He is a sort of celebrity now in your eyes; and whenever you take your pretty cousins to the exhibition, and you come in front of



Strontian's picture of 'The Recompense,' you will not fail to tell them about Tunnmash and his collection.

Thus, in a measure, the owner of 'The Recompense' becomes almost as famous as the picture itself; indeed, it is said that, having no real knowledge of painting, he frequently buys for this purpose only. Not impossible is it that an additional interest is added to this point in the case, if Chaffinch tells you that Tunnmash did not get the picture straight off Strontian's easel, but gave Racksell, the eminent dealer, nearly a thousand pounds profit on it, Strontian being under a contract to Racksell to let him have everything he paints for the next four years; 'sold himself,' as Chaffinch facetiously phrases it, 'like Dr. Faustus;' and if Strontian had to be described in a play-bill you would write, 'Strontian, a painter, slave to Racksell.'

There is no difficulty in your learning who are the lucky possessors of the forty or fifty highly-meritorious and skilfully-executed works, both in oil and water-colour, which decorate our annual exhibitions. I say there may be no obstacle to this; still, somehow we seldom meet them again; at least, I seldom do. They are very charming works, but, nevertheless, they retire unostentatiously to the walls and portfolios of quiet yet wealthy connoisseurs, residing chiefly in the suburbs, and who, in most cases, are themselves given to sketching and painting.

Having got thus far into our problem, the real difficulties begin rapidly to accumulate. There are three

annual water-colour exhibitions—the ‘Old Gallery,’ the ‘Institute,’ and the ‘General Exhibition,’ at the Dudley Gallery, Egyptian Hall. There are four annual exhibitions of oil-painting,—the ‘Royal Academy,’ the ‘Society of British Artists,’ Suffolk-street, the ‘Crystal Palace,’ and the late ‘British Institution;’ the three first having water-colour contingents, to say nothing of the ‘French Gallery’ in Pall Mall, winter exhibitions of all kinds, and a host of dealers’ private exhibitions, and exhibitions devoted exclusively to the works of one artist.

Two of the water-colour galleries have also biennial displays of so-called sketches by the members of the societies. Exhibitions of single pictures likewise start into existence in the course of the London season, and we are invited to view some magnificent and hitherto unknown but undoubtedly original work by Titian or Murillo, which has lain *perdu* for years in the château of a blue-blooded Hidalgo on the confines of Madrid, whence it was dug out by that enterprising virtuoso Signor Fan Tutti, that much-injured and laudable lover of the arts, who, at a terrific personal sacrifice, secured it for the purpose of offering it to the authorities of the National Gallery, for the modest sum of eight thousand guineas. But this benighted and purblind body, condemning it as an indifferent copy, rejects the noble and disinterested offer of the Italian *dilettante*, who takes the present means of showing a down-trodden British public, at one shilling per head, how their national institutions are misgoverned, and what glorious

art is hidden from them, through the ignorance and malice of a self-indulgent and bloated aristocracy.

Again, it may be that that far-famed American artist, Parker P. Plunge, Esq., likewise displays, in a be-screened and red-curtained room, his great picture of the 'Falls of Timbuctoo,' or of the 'Hiawatha' boat-race of a thousand miles in a thousand hours against stream, for one hundred thousand pounds a side, over any number of snaggs, and up any number of waterfalls, the picture being brilliantly lighted by gas at dusk, or on dark days.

We must not, however, include such examples as the two latter, to increase the difficulty of our task, for by the query, 'What becomes of the pictures?' we mean only those which are produced on British soil annually, and which are essentially modern. We will confine ourselves, therefore, simply to those drawings and paintings which find their way year by year to the establishments already indicated.

We will spare ourselves even a calculation of the number of paintings generally, but water-colours in particular, which are never exhibited at all, but which, notwithstanding, somehow disappear from the artists' studios, and by the production of which the artists themselves gain a livelihood; nor will we say anything about the provincial galleries, which in the bulk, perhaps, are *réchauffés* of those in London, but receive a quota of contributions from local artists. We glean from the catalogues that the average number of paintings exhibited annually is, at the Royal Academy,

about one thousand; at the British Artists, Suffolk-street, the same; at the Crystal Palace, rather more; at the British Institution, rather less; at the three water-colour galleries, about fifteen hundred. Excluding all foreign art, and glancing over such documentary evidence as remains in our possession of the numerous scratch exhibitions, likewise above referred to, we may safely aver, upon a moderate computation, that there are something like eight or ten thousand new pictures absolutely exhibited during every season in London alone. When we remember that for every one exhibited there is an average of three rejected by the councils or committees of selection, which, consequently, swell the numbers to forty thousand newly-produced works every year, we must surely be startled by such statistics, and have our curiosity aroused to know the ultimate fate of so much paint and patience. We will not stop to philosophies on the number of heads and hands employed to cover this heap of canvas and paper with more or less interesting designs; nor speculate on the amount of hours occupied in producing these works, or calculate the ounces of gold, the forests of wood, and tons of plaster-mouldings which are used in framing them; nor will we endeavour to make even the roughest estimate of how many square feet of glass, paper, canvas, and panel must be required for the full completion of the works ere they are fit for the exhibitions. The brushes that are worn out, the palettes which are destroyed from being left uncleaned, the paint that is wasted, and that which is used, can scarcely be guessed

at; neither need we endeavour to do this : our inquiry merely has reference to 'What becomes of the pictures?' as we leave them upon the close of the exhibitions.

We have seen how a few of the very best, the best, and the next best are disposed of—say the commander-in-chief, the generals of division, the brigadiers; then, continuing our military simile, we may ask, Where are the colonels, the lieutenant-colonels, the majors, captains, subalterns, and non-commissioned officers? but, above all, we may demand, What becomes of the rank and file of this army of art? A feeble-minded friend, smoking his pipe with me at this moment, hearing these last words, as my enthusiasm in the great inquiry leads me to utter them aloud, suggests, 'The Art Union.' I laugh derisively, and straightway ask him, as I ask you, my reader, 'Did you ever win a prize in the Art Union? Did you ever know any *one* (you never could have known any *two*) who ever did? For my own part, not being a noble lord of high degree, I certainly never have won a prize; and possessing no acquaintances in New Zealand, Honolulu, Acapulco, or the Andaman Islands, there is not much chance of my knowing anybody who ever did win one. For if we are to believe (which, of course, we do) the records of the Society for the Promotion, &c., it is in such localities that the chief bulk of the fortunate holders of the lucky numbers reside. They are entitled to select their prize from any of the London exhibitions (that little village being especially handy for them);—a great boon, which I trust they duly appreciate.

No; the Art Union takes off a hundred or two, maybe, but, after our statistics, this is no answer to the inquiry. Moreover, although we know that Tunn-mash and his brethren in the North buy very largely; and despite the talismanic star and the welcome little blue ticket which appear in the corner of plenty of our pictures and drawings, indicating that they are sold; and although we know that the Art Union and the quiet tasteful connoisseurs of the suburbs conduce to this result—yet into how many houses do we go without coming across anything more in the way of pictorial art than a few engravings or photographs, not to mention those abodes where the eye can rest upon nothing but the paperhanger's or the grainer's handicraft!

Truly, we have certain evidence that an enormous number of pictures are sold; but, after all, one is warranted even in asking what becomes of them, since we never see so much as a tenth part of them again. If, therefore, the inquiry is justifiable about pictures that *have* found purchasers, how much more so is it in the case of those that have not been so fortunate!

What becomes of the two rows above the line? What becomes of the topmost row, just under the cornice? And what becomes of the lowest row, just above the floor? And O, divine Athenæ! what becomes of those that are never hung at all, the rejected addresses to every picture-show, and of which, as we have said, there are always three to one of the accepted?

To suggest, as does now my friend of the pipe and feeble mind (a horrible matter-of-fact fellow, who always

wants to explain things away), that they are returned to the artists and stowed aside in their establishments or studios, is absurd. Three or four years of such returns could not fail to render their rooms uninhabitable, especially in the case of oil-pictures ; as for the water-colours, they can be put somewhat more compactly into portfolios, and the frames utilised for fresh work. Indeed, we know that many collectors of drawings immediately unframe their purchases and hide them away in some such receptacles, as though accumulativeness was occasionally the stimulant to art patronage.

I once heard of a man somewhere in the North who, knowing nothing in the world about pictures, had nevertheless been buying them all his life, until every inch of his walls was covered, and every available space of corner and recess had its little stack of hidden treasures. At last—he was in despair—he could stow no more, and had ceased to purchase. Then he became a moody, gloomy man. Suddenly, however, he revived, and pictures were again sent home to his already overcrowded house. He had discovered a new place to deposit them in—he found he could put a large number under his bed !

In this fact we do see at last the glimmer of an answer, at all events to that part of our enigma which refers to sold works.

Is not a great deal more port-wine binned away by people who never touch it themselves, but who like to have the reputation of possessing it, than is drunk nowadays by mankind generally ? Like it, are not

pictures very frequently bought for much the same reason, and being classed as a commodity in the minds of the owners with the aforesaid generous fluid, treated after the same fashion by being excluded from public gaze, and very possibly 'laid down' under the bed?

If the real answer be not found in these suggestions, where are we to look for it? Who can give it? If this were not the case, surely some of our old friends of the exhibitions would oftener beam upon us than they do, from the walls of our domestic mansions.

Messieurs les artistes, peintres, are a numerous body, and their ranks are continually being recruited. Each year, consequently, a larger mass of canvas and paper is covered; and bearing this statement in mind, with all that has been said before, we seem even further off than ever from accounting for the ultimate destination of the majority of our pictures. No. I repeat, it is still a deep and inscrutable mystery, to which those of Udolpho are as nothing; a puzzle more puzzling than ever entered into the ingenuity of a Chinaman to invent; an interrogation more perplexing than could be put by the veriest sphinx, and apparently as unanswerable as the great Sam Weller's inquiry about dead donkeys.

Until we can obtain the services of some such enterprising minds as a Livingstone, a Speke, or a Baker, this unexplored region of the art-world, this Hades, or pictorial limbo, into which it is evident the efforts of our modern painters are thrust, must remain a *terra incognita*.

In combination with the science of a Faraday or a

Tyndall, the researches of such explorers might not be fruitless ; and now that the question is thus made a public one—particularly at a time when unaccountable disappearances are racking the brains of active and intelligent detectives—we may expect that the attention of a few equally high and mighty intellects will be drawn towards it, and by their united efforts obtain a solution of the riddle.

Perhaps when the Alpine Club have exhausted the dangers and novelties of the ‘peaks, passes, and glaciers,’ *here* may be a new field for the exercise of their super-abundant energies. Here, I suggest, is an unknown world ; let them plunge boldly into it, and receive for their reward the thanks of an inquiring multitude.

It has been shown, to a great extent, ‘what does *not* become of the pictures ;’ and this should be one step towards finding out ‘what does.’

THE SECRET OF THE STAIR.

A Lawyer's Story.

HE was a client of mine was John Dargle, and I can tell his story, or at least act as chorus to it; for he tells the greater part of it himself in words I cannot improve upon.

His old uncle, Philip Makerace, left him the whole of his property quite unexpectedly; for in the first place it was supposed he had nothing to leave, and in the second he had a son, William Makerace, who should have been the natural heir.

But father and son had never got on well together, and at the time of the old man's death there was a wide breach. He was a quarrelsome ill-conditioned old fellow, and the son took after him. He quarrelled with his only sister, John Dargle's mother, years and years ago, because she chose to marry a merchant skipper; and when he, poor man, was lost at sea, leaving his widow and an only boy all but destitute, Philip Makerace scarcely put out a hand to help her. Yet he seemed to have a lingering liking for the boy, apprenticed him to the merchant marine, and, as I have said, when he was just three-and-twenty, finally left him about three thousand a year.

This was a great change for mother and son, who had been living pretty much upon the scant wages of the young sailor. He was a kindly, simple, good chap was Jack—a British tar to the backbone—and I rejoiced heartily at his good fortune. I knew his father and all the circumstances of the marriage, but I never cottoned to old Philip; and though he lived within a few miles of me here at Nuncester, I never saw him, and hardly knew either him or his son William.

Chillestone, as his old tumble-down house was named, was what artists would call a picturesque place, and John Dargle, when he came into possession, conceived the strange idea of living in it, and the yet more strange idea of getting his cousin, this William Make-race, who was an architect by profession, to restore, enlarge, and beautify it. Jack was magnanimous; he felt that William had been hardly treated; looked upon himself, indeed, as a sort of usurper; and longing to conciliate and in some sort to compensate the ousted heir, took this opportunity, the first which offered, of expressing his good-will and intentions towards his cousin.

If I point out one important clause in Philip Make-race's will, and give an extract from a letter written by the architect to his cousin, just as the restoration of Chillestone was completed, I can let Jack go on with his story. The clause in the will was to the effect that the father's property should revert to the son only in case of John Dargle (the nephew) dying without issue. The extract from the architect's letter is as follows:

‘It still remains quite an old-fashioned house to look at externally, with stacks of quaint, twisted, corkscrew chimneys, gable-ends, great brown cross-beams and joists showing out amidst the gray stone and red brick. A genuine half-timbered house, as the phrase goes, with lintels and overhanging upper stories, a wide wooden porch, and stone-mullioned lattice windows. When time and well-trained creepers shall have mellowed and toned its colours down, the additions will appear as antique and as Elizabethan as the original portion, and as if the whole of it had been erected three hundred years ago.

‘Internally I have endeavoured to preserve the same characteristics as far as was consistent with modern ideas of comfort, and you must come and see how I have succeeded. But the staircase is a triumph, and has cost a world of thought.

‘Facing the entrance, and ascending from the farthest extremity of the square hall, it divides into two return flights from a low broad landing at the top of the eighth stair. The carved-oak balustrade, the newels, and the polished flooring really give it a very antique and picturesque appearance. The space necessary for it was obtained by building out at the rear, and thus the staircase forms a projecting mass, independent of the room-space, a shaft as it were, up and down which, had I been building a modern hotel, a lift would have been worked. You may remember there was a useless old well close at the back of the house, and as it perversely came exactly where I designed erecting the

block for the staircase, I was obliged to fill it up and brick it over.

‘I have taken up my quarters at Chillestone for the last five weeks, the better to superintend the finishing touches ; and although a short time must elapse before it is quite habitable, I would urge you to come over at once and spend a day or two, and see for yourself if there be anything you can suggest. We are, as you know, short-handed as to domestics, there being only the infirm old woman who acted as housekeeper and cook to my father, and a lout of a stable-lad.

‘As you expressed a wish that your mother should select your servants, I have contrived to put up with this limited staff, and I daresay you won’t be more inconvenienced by it for a night or two than I am ; so please let me hear that you are coming, and the room you occupied before shall be got ready.—Believe me always faithfully yours,

‘WILLIAM MAKERACE.’

Now John Dargle must speak for himself :

When I gave up the sea I brought my mother to Worcester, for the general convenience of being within easy reach of Chillestone, and that we might move into it as soon as it should be ready. William Makerace’s letter shows that this time was at hand ; so I hailed his invitation gladly, hoping that by making a push with the work-people we might eat our Christmas dinner in what was to become to me my permanent home.

I had been away in London, and three months had passed since I had been over to the house ; then it was in the midst of the alterations ; now I was to find it all but habitable ; so I looked forward gleefully to the journey.

Eighteen miles of a beautiful but lonely country lay between the old city and the old house. A carrier's cart passed along the road at the end of the lane which led to Chillestone three times a week each way, otherwise there was no public conveyance which approached it nearer than five miles at the little market town of Nuncester. Hence to ride was obviously the simplest means of transit ; and when did a sailor ever fail to get across a horse if he had a chance ? So hiring one from a livery-stable I started one bright frosty morning, the beginning of December, having sent on an ample kit of clothing by the carrier the day before. I had never seen that part of the country in the depth of winter, and somehow I confess I was not quite so enthusiastic about its beauties as I expected. As I neared Chillestone a certain sense of depression and loneliness came over me, which was quite a novel sensation. The bare hedgerows and trees which clustered thickly hereabouts ; the wild stormy clouds that for the latter part of the journey had been steadily thickening until they now made a gray dull pall over the whole of the sky, unmistakably betokening a heavy fall of snow ; the solitary situation of the house, which was perched on the crest of a great billowing hill, with a straggling copse sloping away from it on three sides,

and approached by a short avenue of limes in the front, made up a scene by no means cheery, and contrasted unfavourably with the rich autumn-tinted foliage and warm mellow light, in the midst of which I had last looked upon the spot. The raw newness of the gables and stacks of tall chimneys just added to the house had for the present not improved it. The rubbish and builder's lumber still encumbering the ground in every direction, and the windows with that wonderful bull's-eye which always appears through the glazier's ingenuity upon the new panes until they are finally cleaned, added not a little to the generally unfinished and uninviting aspect of the place. I was disappointed; my depression increased with every step; I wondered how I could ever have fancied it, or have imagined that, enlarged and renovated, the house would be pleasant to live in. Scarcely a remnant of the old structure was visible, and what there was had been scraped and cleaned. Everything looked painfully new and uncomfortable; time, I thought, would have hard work to tone it all down. Above all I was surprised not to see any workpeople about; indeed, I had not set eyes upon a living creature since I passed the last cottage on the road four miles off, and the extreme stillness of the air intensified the silence which prevailed.

Inside, however, matters brightened: a blazing wood fire on the dogs in the old hall set the polished floor, wainscot, ceiling, and beams reflecting and sparkling in the deepening shadows of the afternoon like so

many fireworks. This was the ancient part of the building, and was comparatively untouched; and I could have lingered in the chimney corner here willingly, had not my cousin, after meeting me at the porch as I dismounted, and whistling to the stable-boy to take my horse, urged me onward, with a few brief remarks, to look at his pet staircase, the position of which he had described.

It was a handsome piece of work, no doubt, but it appeared to offer no remarkable features to my unprofessional eyes. It was in thorough keeping with the rest of the additions, which we then proceeded to examine in detail; and the air of approaching finish, comfort, and convenience within doors compensated for the backward state of the building outside.

A simple dinner, prepared and fairly well served by the old housekeeper, was laid in the oak parlour opening from the hall, and under the influence of it and a bottle of generous Burgundy, a large store of which our miserly predecessor had hoarded untouched for years, my spirits revived. I thanked my cousin (who promised that his share of the work should be entirely completed in less than a week) for what he had been doing, complimented him on the display of his professional skill, and over our pipes consulted upon various family and domestic arrangements, such as supplies, furnishing, &c. Now of course at intervals, since my friendly overtures towards my cousin began, we had had many confabulations, but never had we been thrown together under quite such social circumstances as

these. At no time very genial, it seemed to cost him an effort to be as much so now as the occasion of this little house-warming demanded. He fidgeted in and out of the room after dinner once or twice; he took hardly any wine; and I thought I observed an air of preoccupation and restraint about him which had not struck me before. He looked paler and thinner, his always restless colourless eyes were more restless than usual, his thin lips were drawn down at the corners, and his dark unkempt hair gave a more than ever cadaverous tone to his complexion. I could not help remarking to him that he did not look well.

‘No, I am not first rate,’ said he. ‘I can’t sleep, and nothing pulls a fellow down more than that; but I weigh as much as you do, I expect, even now; we are much about the same height and build.’

‘Are we? I should have guessed you to be the taller.’

‘I think not,’ he answered. ‘Stand up a moment.’

We measured our heights against the wall; he was right.

‘Yes,’ he went on, ‘and we are about the same size round the chest; let us see.’

He tried with his professional tape measure which he took from his pocket; he was right again within an inch—I was rather the broader.

‘Your coats would fit me better than my own,’ he continued; ‘tailors never give me room enough. I’ll be bound that pea-jacket of yours which you hung in the hall would go on like a glove.’

He stepped out and returned in it. It did fit as if it had been made for him. 'And what a comfortable cap this is,' he added, dandling mine, which had been hanging with the coat, in his hand. It was a half naval-looking affair, with a broad horizontal peak.

'That fits me too,' he said, as he placed it on his head; 'it's very comfortable; I notice you always wear it.'

'Yes,' I replied, 'I can't stand your chimney-pot hats; my old sea habits are too free and easy for that.'

Then, after a few more comments, cap and coat being restored to their peg in the hall, we chatted on over another pipe, and then agreed it was time to turn in.

'Don't be alarmed,' said Makerace, as we rose, 'if you hear me moving in the night. Sometimes, when I don't sleep, I am obliged to get up and walk about a bit; it's the only thing that quiets my restlessness. It's a horrible nuisance to lie awake in bed for hours. Then in the morning I am often dead asleep when I ought to be getting up, so you will not mind if I am not down to breakfast. I have ordered it at 8.30; I know you are an early riser, so don't wait for me. I must get sleep when I can. And, by the way, if you hear the porch bell ring in the front about seven o'clock, you'll know it's the old woman come over to light the fires and boil the kettle.' Then he went on after a slight pause, during which he seemed to be revolving something in his mind, 'And would you object, if you don't think I am stirring, to going down

and letting her in? Because, you know, we are alone in the house; we've got the only two beds that are usable; and until we could furnish the house I was obliged to let the boy and the old woman go on sleeping in what was the gardener's cottage, where we put them during the alterations.'

'Right you are, sir,' I answered; 'I'll let her in. Don't disturb yourself; go on sleeping as long as you can; I am used to taking things in the rough.'

It is unnecessary to describe the various rooms. Most of them were entirely empty; but our two, especially that set apart for me, had been fitted up with the best of the furniture found in the house. My chamber, which was not new, lay at the rear, and could formerly only be approached by the old staircase, which now, however, since the erection of a new flight, was to be kept merely for the servants' use. Of course, when my cousin and I took our candles, we went up by the new stairs, bidding each other good-night at my door. His room lay on the farther side of the landing at the head of the old stairs, and as he opened a red-baize swing-door which shut it off from the passage along which we had passed, he said, with a feeble laugh, 'I shall have a bolt put on to this, for I must have the grand staircase used now by the "quality," and no other. Mind you don't make a mistake in the morning, and go down the wrong way. You will remember that, when the old woman rings, the new flight of stairs will take you down exactly opposite to the porch-door, just across the hall. Don't come this way; for though you can get

into the hall from it, it properly leads to the back premises and kitchen. Good-night !'

Thus we parted the best of friends ; and thinking over the strangeness of our relations, of my quixotic notion of reforming and softening the character of this man, of its only partial success, unknowingly distrusting him, perhaps, all the while, I put out my candle and fell into a restless sleep, from which I almost immediately awoke.

At that moment a flash of light crossed the window facing the foot of the bed. Indeed it was this which probably awakened me at first. I thought I was dreaming, but in an instant there came another dancing flickering reflection of light through the curtain. Strange, surely, at this time of night, under the circumstances ! What could it be ? The natural prompting was to get up and look out. Pulling aside the blind I found the window frosted with the cold, and upon rubbing the glass I could see there had been a fall of snow, and that I was gazing down into a corner of the stable-yard. The lad, our 'help,' was moving about with a lantern, and presently entered one of the stables, left the door ajar, and remained some time within, during which there were sounds as if he were harnessing a horse. Then he came out, locked the door, hung the key up close against it, and disappeared.

'Nothing in that,' said I, returning to bed. 'I don't suppose he was really harnessing a horse ; he had only neglected some bit of work which had to be done overnight.'

But the episode had thoroughly aroused me, and, do what I would, I could not go to sleep again, and lay staring at the darkness for hours. It is said that the test of a man's moral courage should be made about two o'clock in the morning; if he be lying broad awake then, and has no qualms or thoughts of gloom and dread, he must be truly brave; and this hour, I discovered by striking my repeater, had just passed. It did not find me entirely free from a certain sense of vague apprehension and depression, the same kind of depression which was so new to me, and of which I had a slight foretaste as I rode up to the house.

Nearly three hours later, just as I was at last on the point of dropping off to sleep, I was again set broad awake by the creaking of a door, followed by the sound of a footstep stealthily descending the old back staircase. Suddenly remembering what Makerace had said about his restlessness, my inclination was to pay no heed to these noises; but a mysterious something, more powerful than my own will, insisted that I should; and in spite of every effort I could not help listening, as if my life depended upon what I should hear.

Curious that I find myself uttering these words, which literally represent the fact. Then perversely, in a minute or two, when all was quiet again, I must needs want to hear more. I was disappointed that there was nothing more to hear, and in my irritable state I must forsooth spring out of bed, open the door quietly, and creep softly on to the landing. This time

I was surprised to see a light inside the house. I was not three yards from the head of the upper flight of the new stairs, and looking over the handrail could see where the broad landing joined the lower, and so down to its foot in the hall.

But here my surprise was intensified tenfold by beholding my cousin in the act of turning to and fro upon its base one of the newels which surmounted the pedestals at the termination of the balustrade.

He has set a small dark lantern on the lower stair; now he raises it, and, by its light, examines the carved ornament, which appears to move on a pivot. He works the piece of mechanism, whatever it is, several times, and eventually, seeming satisfied, creeps noiselessly out of sight. But the circumstance which startles and mystifies me beyond all else is, that he wears a pair of short riding-boots, with socks drawn over the feet to deaden the tread, and my cap and pea-jacket. Restraining the impulse to call to him, I go back to my room bewildered, and without making a sound. Whilst striving to divine the meaning of what has passed, I am again attracted by a light flashing outside the window. Looking out as before, I dimly perceive, by the aid of the lantern he still carries, Makerace leading out of the stable my horse saddled and bridled. Finally, after examining the stirrup-leathers and girths and softly closing the stable-door, he puts out the light, and, I suppose, mounts and rides away. But the deep snow muffles every sound save the clank of a bolt in the direction of the stable-gates; and beyond a ghostly

paleness, which the white sheet now overspreading roofs and ground reflects for a few yards under the dark night, nothing can be seen.

Once give a naturally unsuspicious nature cause to suspect, and distrust becomes habitual, and often unreasonable. From the moment I saw Makerace intentionally disguised in my cap and coat I was convinced foul play was meditated. To instantly slip on some clothes was the unconscious act of the next few minutes; then, to make quite sure I was not dreaming, I took the candle which I had lighted, and walked straight into Makerace's room. Of course it was empty. A seaman's impulse to look out from aloft when off a dangerous coast urged me to ascend immediately to an attic window in the roof, whence a view of the whole country for miles round could be had. Yet it was barely six o'clock, and still pitch dark. Nevertheless, putting out the light, up I went. Nothing was visible save the faint glimmer from the snow, which, I discovered by opening the window, had ceased falling; and a big star twinkling in the east seemed to betoken a clear morning. Sorely puzzled as to the best course to take, I lingered longer at the window, I suppose, than I thought, and at length became aware of the approach of dawn.

Gently, gently the night lifted, as I had seen it many a time from the mast-head; but the ghostly weird whiteness all around had a strange and rather appalling effect. As the country was gradually revealed, the sensation of solitude exceeded anything I

had ever experienced at sea. The main road to Worcester was only here and there marked by the thin lines of hedgerows, which with the straggling copse and larger trees looked gaunt and fantastic under the weight of their winter garb. As the light increased, odd patches of dark in the hollows, indicating homesteads or solitary barns, plantations, ponds, or indescribable spots that stood conspicuous from being more sheltered and less snow-clad, became visible. Suddenly as the morning brightened I could trace in the snow a distinct line of horse's hoof-prints along the lane that ran past the stable-gates down from the house to the high-road. Clearly they showed the way Makerace had taken, and, if I may so express it, were the only signs of life to be seen; they seemed to give me a clue, and I followed it up eagerly. In places, however, it was lost; but my quick eye enabled me to take it up again and again where it crested hills, dipped into hollows, and emerged upon the succeeding side of the rising ground. For an inconceivable distance, all along the road towards Worcester, I plainly tracked the horse's hoof-prints by the increasing light; then, remembering there was a telescope amongst my kit, I fetched it, and by its aid could make them out a great way farther.

I was in the act of lowering the glass, when a black speck moving along the last patch of roadway visible in the distance stopped me, and a close inspection of the object showed it to be a riderless horse. Yes, certainly; and I watched him quietly trotting by himself through

that lonely waste until thick snow-flakes, which were again falling, shut him from my sight. What was I to understand? The next few minutes served, with what had gone before, to suggest the truth, to give me an inkling of Makerace's intentions, and I jumped to a conclusion, as by instinct; for who was this slouching up the hill through the straggling copse but the man himself—no longer wearing my pea-jacket and cap, but his own soft wideawake and close-fitting shooting-coat!

With the quickness of lightning I understood that he would wish it to appear that I had left the house, and—I hardly dared breathe it to myself—had come to some untimely end upon the road, which idea, my riderless horse, by naturally returning to his stables in Worcester, would confirm; and that now, having prepared this show of facts, he was coming back to carry out on my person the remainder of the diabolical scheme, whatever it was, that he had planned,—in short, by some means or other, here, with no one but ourselves in this isolated house, to make away with me. This, I say, was the conclusion I jumped to in far less time than it takes me to utter it, and a confirmation of these suspicions immediately followed. He was ringing at the front door; *he*, who had gone out by the back and could so return had he wished; but no, he was trying to bring me to the porch by the ring which he hoped I should understand as that of the old house-keeper coming to her morning's work. It was just the hour I was to expect her—half-past seven.

As I glided from my post of observation at the window in the roof down to my own room, I decided what to do. I would leave the house by the stable-yard if I could, without being seen. I would not yet confront this man, for the dread with which his actions filled me was so overwhelming, that whatever amount of superstition there may be in my nature forbade my disregarding it. Anywhere else I would face him, and make him explain himself; but not *here*, not in this house, where to me, within the last two or three hours, unseen dangers and treachery had appeared to start up from its very walls and foundations.

For his own sake he should not have the chance of completing the crime I felt he contemplated, and for my own sake I would not have the chance of his blood upon my hands, as in self-defence might happen.

Away, then, with the utmost speed; down the old stairs, and out by the back door, through the stable-yard, into the open snow-clad country. The gentle ringing in the front still continues whilst I huddle on some more clothing—is still continuing as I quit the house. Now, straight to Newcastle, where dwells the friend whom advice I mean to seek. Softly closing the door after me, I find my way with great difficulty by a short cut through the sleeping house to what I imagine to be the front door at the back end. Two doors to be sure, standing in the line of the wall facing the street—what I presume to be the front door I have just passed—yet the door is unlocked—and I stand at last in the open air, the door of the house behind me, and the way before me.

headed, snow-besmirched, weary, and excited, looking like a hunted tramp, in front of a substantial house on the outskirts of Nuncester.

As I walk up the shrubbery I am seen by the inmate of a snug library on the ground-floor, and am admitted by him with many an expression of surprise, before I have had time to lay my hand on the bell, which swings over the words, engraven on a brass plate, 'Mr. Crouch, Solicitor.'

'Can't agree with you; don't take your view of it at all. Queer and mysterious, no doubt; but not necessarily treachery; the fellow is mad. Open to explanation, I should think; certainly shouldn't have done what you have. Don't mean to say there was not cause for caution; but, face to face, you are as good a man as he is, and I should have thought could have taken care of yourself. I would have had it out with him then and there; but then I'm matter of fact, and there's no romance or superstition about me.'

This is the spirit in which I received John Dargle's account of himself, and which I have reproduced from the shorthand notes I took while he delivered it to me over the breakfast he so sorely needed after his tramp. I had not seen him for months; but, knowing the house to be nearly finished, was looking forward to having my old friend Mrs. Dargle and her son for neighbours. I had never quite seen the reason for Jack's magnanimity towards his cousin. I should never have had anything to do with him, but I did not

know him, and did not want. Father and son were both curmudgeons, to my thinking.

Well, John Dargle was much agitated and inclined to be angry, because I did not see the case with his eyes ; but as I had known him from a boy to be always a dreamy superstitious sort of chap, I made allowance, and as I had had a strong regard for his father, I said no more, but suggested that if I could manage to drive through the snow I would go to Chillestone at once, ask for John Dargle, and see what would happen. So we settled it, and further we agreed that I should take him with me to within half a mile of the house, and that when I had got about an hour's start he should follow and put in an appearance there also. Meanwhile, I was to act according to circumstances and what they might have revealed to me.

And a pretty drive through that heavy snow we had ! But it's as well I went, perhaps ; and popping John out as agreed, I drove on the last half-mile alone.

I had never seen this architect ; but as the door was opened to me when I drove up by a sallow-faced, dark-haired young man, I concluded it was he, and from the first I did not like the look of him. He had a nasty pinched-up face, and furtive eyes which never rested straight on mine for a second from the beginning to the end of our acquaintance, though truly that was not a long one. If his appearance did not please me, certainly his answer to my inquiry for John Dargle pleased me less, and I began to modify the view I had

taken of that young gentleman's story. I smelt a rat when Mr. Makerace told me that his cousin had been obliged to leave very early in the morning, owing to some letters he found on his arrival the day before, and which required his presence in London.

'He started by five this morning to ride to Worcester to catch the first up-train,' said Makerace. 'Mike here,' pointing to the stable-boy, who had come round on the appearance of the dog-cart, 'got his horse ready last night by my orders, didn't you, Mike?'

'Ees, sir,' grinned Mike, 'and I kind a seed un go off; leastways, I was awake about five, and seed a light a-moving in t' stable-yard.'

I controlled my countenance, and said, 'That's very awkward; I had an appointment with him here at one o'clock, and I am expecting my clerk in half an hour or so to meet me. We were going into some business matters with Mr. Dargle; what can I do?'

'I don't know really,' was the answer. 'He won't be here to-day.'

'Humph! Well, will you allow me to wait a little, that I may not miss my clerk, as I shall have to take him back?'

'O, yes, if you wish; but the place is very unfinished.'

I could see he wanted to get rid of me, and, of course, *now* I was determined he should *not*.

'Never mind; there's a fire in the hall, I see; I'll just sit down there, if you please, until my man comes.' And was not I glad my man *was* coming,

to give the lie point-blank to this rascal? There would be a scene, I thought, and it would be amusing. But what a scene! Who could have anticipated it? Not the wildest romancer—certainly not such a prosaic old fellow as I.

Very reluctantly I was allowed to enter, and the dog-cart was taken to the stables. I warmed myself at the fire, looked curiously towards the staircase at the back of the hall, made one or two commonplace remarks, and sat down. Makerace was evidently very uncomfortable, and after fidgeting about for a few minutes, suddenly remembered he had a letter to write, asked to be excused, and retreated up the staircase. A strong curiosity to examine the newels of the balustrade, which John had made such a rigmarole about, was on me directly I caught sight of them, and the moment I was alone I gratified it.

The first I touched on the left was quite solid and immovable; but the other, sure enough, yielded to my attempt to turn it, and went smoothly, as if on a pivot, two sides round; yet each face being equal, it did not show that it had been meddled with, and I turned it back again to its former position. Trying it once more, thus bringing it again two sides round, wondering what the deuce it meant, and before I could re-turn it, I heard Makerace's footstep above.

Not wishing to be caught prying, I dropped my hands behind me, and stood pretending to admire the staircase. At that moment the porch-bell rang; I guessed who it was, straightway opened the door, and

admitted John Dargle. Motioning him to be silent, we both advanced to the foot of the stairs.

‘My clerk has arrived, Mr. Makerace,’ I called up then; ‘but I should like to leave a message, if you will step down.’

We heard him coming, and saw his hand gliding along the upper balustrade. He reached the last stair which turned on to the landing at the head of the flight, at the bottom of which we stood. He saw us—saw John, unmistakably John Dargle—with the light from the window above falling full on him.

There was a pause—neither of us stirred. Evidently Makerace’s first impulse was to retreat; but appearing to recover his presence of mind, he broke into a short forced laugh, stepped forward on to the landing, and—disappeared!—dropped straight through the floor almost without a sound!

Wonder and consternation seized us, at least me, but Jack seemed to have a glimmering of the truth. Catching my arm, he exclaimed,

‘There, I knew there was some devilry on these stairs. Have you touched the newel?’

‘Yes.’

‘Then by heaven we’ve got at the secret!’

We rushed up to the edge of the landing. Very cautiously Jack put one foot lightly upon it. The floor yielded. Two broad planks yielded with a spring, and opened more than wide enough to admit a man’s body. Released from the pressure of the foot, they returned to their place, looking flat and solid, giving


no hint of their treachery, and forming what is called on the stage a 'vampire trap.'

Shouts and calls bring round the old housekeeper and the boy. Slowly they are made to understand what has happened. Nothing can be seen down the hole, and nothing can be heard. The man has disappeared as thoroughly as if he had never been. Jack is for going down by a ladder; but the old woman, with unexpected intelligence, suggests the cellar under the stairs; 'Mr. Makerace has the key.'

'A hatchet, then, quick!' cries Jack; and in another minute or two he is battering in the polished panels of a hitherto unnoticed door by the side of and beneath the first flight of stairs.

'A light! bring a light!' he again cries; and in a few more minutes we have all entered and are standing round the exterior of a kind of shaft of planking connecting the landing, now but a foot or two above our heads, with the ground on which we stand. More hacking and battering, and the basement of the woodwork is partially removed—removed sufficiently enough to reveal the top of the old well, across which is fitted a second trap, precisely similar in action to the one above, an adaptation, indeed (with a spring), of the usual covering of draw-wells.

Once more the hatchet has to be vigorously used, for the spring which has been attached to the trap refuses to yield except to a downward pressure. It will allow anything to descend but nothing to come up—a horizontal rat-trap, in fact.



Smashing and wrenching away at the woodwork, the water becomes visible as we bend over with the lantern.

'There wern't above eight feet of it,' says Mike, 'when it was kivered up. Let I fetch a ladder and a rake.'

After a little delay they are brought, and the ladder reaches to the bottom, some twelve or fifteen feet below.

Jack is the first to descend, but presently the two are down, with the lantern, and struggling with a heavy weight. Slowly and with difficulty they bring it up to the edge of the well, and the pale-yellow light falls upon the lifeless body of William Makerace, drowned like a rat in a hole by his own devilish contrivance, and without being able to utter a cry!

Here was the secret of the stair, indeed; and it was not very difficult to divine who was to have been let into it.

Night had come before the constabulary of Nuncester were on the spot, and very few more details will complete my story.

At the inquest the old housekeeper bore out our conclusions, as indeed did all the witnesses. She had been told, with the boy Mike, that Mr. Dargle would have to leave very early in the morning, and that his horse was to be left ready saddled in the stall. Breakfast would only be required for one, and she was not to come round to the house or disturb Mr. Makerace till ten o'clock. He had been in the habit of locking

himself in, and had been alone in the house for more than a week. She had often seen him sawing planks at a bench the carpenters had left. He told her he was putting up shelves in the cupboard under the stairs. She had also noticed that one of the ornaments on the banister had been removed, and was afterwards put back. Latterly the deceased had looked a little 'queer-like,' she thought.

A farm-labourer deposed to seeing a riderless horse trotting up Honey-grove Hill as he was going to his work on the morning in question, and coming upon the animal's hoof-prints as he reached the road, he tracked them back—they lying in his way—to Honey-grove Bottom. There, against one of the buttresses of the bridge which crosses the little river Glebe, he saw lying half on the ice and half in the water a sailor's pea-jacket. On scrambling down to it, he came upon a cap (produced with the jacket, and identified as Mr. Dargle's). He secured them, and observed that the ice was much broken near the middle of the stream, as if something had fallen through it. There were a man's footsteps in addition to those of the horse all about the spot; but whilst he was examining these marks it came on to snow heavily, and they were soon all hidden.

The owner of the livery-stables at Worcester stated that on the morning succeeding the day on which Mr. Dargle had hired the horse, the creature returned to the yard by itself; but he did not know the rights of the case until summoned to the inquest.

The chief of the county constabulary stated that he

had made a minute inspection of the place where the deceased met his death, and that he found the turning of the newel acted upon a bolt under the trap on the stair-landing. When turned in one direction, the planking was supported by it; but when in the other, the support being withdrawn, the planking would open at the slightest pressure.

The foreman of the works stated that any such apparatus was quite unknown to him, and that no springs or shafts of woodwork, connecting the landing with the well, had been made under his eyes; the well had been left planked over merely, according to Mr. Makerace's orders.

The jury inspected the mechanism of the stairs before retiring to consider their verdict.

When they returned, the foreman said: 'They found that the deceased had come to his death by falling into a well through a trap-door, which had been unfastened accidentally by Mr. Crouch, whilst that witness was examining the ornament by which the bolt was turned; but by whom, and for what purpose, such a contrivance had been constructed there was no evidence to show.'

'No evidence to show,' very likely; but we may draw our own conclusions without being all of us lawyers. Any way, John Dargle drew his, and very soon sold the Chillestone property. His impressionable nature—which, by the way, from laying him open to a presentiment of danger, probably saved his life—made him shrink from adopting the house as his home. Of

course he thought no more of eating his Christmas dinner there; he and his mother shared that meal with me.

Over our wine, and whilst discussing the topic uppermost in our minds, I asked him whether he thought Makerace had supposed his plan had been successful.

‘Certainly,’ said Jack. ‘He concluded that as I came down the stairs to open the door to the supposed housekeeper I fell through, which I should have done, without making more noise than he did, if it had not been for my own wariness and wakefulness; and when he thought it was all over with me, he doubtless entered the house by the back way, as he had gone out. He imagined I was safe in the depths of the well. Whether he intended to leave my body there for ever will never be known. No; had I fallen into his trap, it would have gone forth that I had committed suicide. The scrimmage in the snow and ice at the bridge, spoken to by the labourer, and the finding of the cap and coat, would have been a sort of proof; but, of course, my unlucky remains would never have been found. Such disappearances have happened before now.’

FROM PIMLICO TO PALERMO.

WE take the oddest fancies at times, or what by our friends are so considered. Our last was, that if London be the admitted capital of the planet, it must surely be too big for us, or we too little for it. As the notion took possession of us, it became unendurable; but what our sensations might have been, had it pleased the Fates to have endowed us with land and beeves and flocks and herds, or made us county magnates or metropolitan stars of vast importance, no man can say; as it is, being very odd people, and *rentiers* of the most diminutive order, we find England, with its cold and foggy winters and sunless sloppy summers, does not agree with us long together; we are oppressed by its stuccoed respectability and its glut of wealth, and ever and anon pine for the *cari luoghi* of earlier days, for the sun and the freedom, the *sans gêne*, the cheapness of happiness, and the gaiety of foreign lands. In our native isle we dwell in a doll's house, are waited on by two maids, and sometimes a man, whose surrounding atmosphere indicates plainly that his vocation is 'horsey.' How can we compete with most of the people who are good enough to know us? They invite us to an entertainment in five acts; twenty guests, six

Berlin-gloved greengrocers, with the ancestral butler, who looks like our uncle or a dignitary of the 'church militant,' in attendance; but, in return, we can only bid our society of friends to a mutton-chop and a glass of beer served by the aforesaid limited staff of domestics. No, it never does for us to take too long a spell in London; we are lost in it; we are nothing, nobodies, nowhere. Say that we are Bohemian in our tastes, that we are restless, unstable, and that we are bored by the dulness of a regular or a so-called respectable life; say this, or say anything you please, at any rate we determined to be off, to try for a while society elsewhere.

. 'From Pimlico to Palermo,' why not? There was an alliterative sound about it, rather enticing and suggestive of great contrast. Thus Palermo became our destination. It matters little how we drifted there; we were conscious first of being on Italian soil at Trento, after we had crossed the Brenner with its glittering snow-wreaths. Verona, unceasingly delightful, held us by a spell. Who could grow weary of San Zeno and the Piazza dell' Erbe and the Scaligerian tombs? There we also began the chase we had followed on many a previous tour—the pursuit of old point-lace—and bagged a few fine specimens. If virtue be its own reward, so must lace; for port-wine is as useless to a man in a fit of gout as our purchases of point-lace are to the wife; she keeps it, like a collection of gems, to gloat over and to show to esoteric amateurs, not to wear. We went leisurely through most of the

famous cities of North Italy—Parma, with its Correggios, Modena, Bologna, Piacenza, and others. In almost every place we hunted old lace, not always without success; Florence in due time, then Rome and Naples, thus using up all April and May. Then a fever, caught at Pompeii; attempt at restoration to health at Sorrento; failure; recommendation by native physician to try Capri, where, final success achieved as if by a miracle, we passed the summer. If we had headed this letter 'From Camberwell to Capri,' we would dilate largely on the joys of this Mediterranean rocky islet; but 'From Pimlico to Palermo' is our theme, and so we must back again to Naples, and thence by ship, a little before Christmas, to the Sicilian city. The weather? Ah, yes!—well, it was not cold, but anything wetter or windier could hardly have been found for the first month after our arrival.

Society, you say? Well, there is an English colony there, as everywhere else almost on the globe; mixed, certainly mixed; and there is a highly aristocratic society, formed by the native nobility, and it is scarcely necessary to add that the two do not amalgamate. This is not the mixture indicated. To the English colony Palermo is nothing but a small country town; to us there is nothing metropolitan about it. The parson, the doctor, the lawyer, the mayor, the land-agent, the principal brewer, the chief maltster, the hop-merchant, who also deals in coals, the wine-merchant, the wool-stapler, the retired half-pay captain with an invalid wife, a stranded baronet with his lady

in gold spectacles and red gown, and a slip of an overlaid, oppressed, ill-dressed, mother-pecked daughter, and a few sea-bathing visitors in the season, who come and go and leave no traces,—this is the sum-total of the English society at Palermo. Outside it there lies a great world, an ancient society of old historical families, living their own lives, generally worthless profligate men and women, both mixing with the townspeople, as oil is mixed with vinegar in salads; no chemical union, not even mechanical suspension; each drop of each fluid as separate and distinct, when jumbled in the great mixing of the Bellini and Geroni, as in their own individual cruets. Not one idea even, literary, scientific, social, moral, political, philanthropic, religious, profane, artistic, or æsthetical, exists, or ever did exist, or can ever exist, between these two sets of people. Both are composed of human beings, breathing the same vital air and living on the same spot of earth. Beyond this there is nothing in common between the great historical houses, their profligate sons and handsome abandoned daughters, and the decorous, matter-of-fact, moral, church-going, humdrum respectable trader we know. Salutations pass in the street from one set to another. The fast good-looking young men dance with the fast good-looking young girls; they will go so far as to dine, when asked, with the stranded baronetto and baronetessa, and sit and sneer at the dinner, laugh at the lady's crimson satin and her antique ornaments; but, within human memory, no man of the great world has ever

taken to wife a daughter of these worthy burghers, nor ever will, were she as lovely as Eve. Never have the stout ruddy mothers or the slim pale daughters from beyond the sea seen the *penetralia* or entered into the 'holy of holies' of the great houses whose windows are across the street only. They have never so much as been in the pink-and-white boudoir or the dressing-room, or seen the girls with their black hair down their white shoulders, or their hollow feet in wadded slippers. No woman can be said to know another till she has been admitted to her bedroom, knows how and of what the chignon is made up, the number and condition of her dresses. How many of these English resident ladies at Palermo, though they may have been here fifty or sixty years, are on such terms as these with the high Palermitan dames?

Not one! There are a good many funny things about Sicily and the Sicilians, hardly printable. The noblemen marry quite late in life, at fifty, fifty-five, or even sixty. They spend their youth in the cheerfulest mode of oat-sowing, and hunting the swift gazelle. In old age, the oats being fully sown, the gazelles either all bagged or grown timid and shy of these mature sportsmen, they rouge themselves, dye their hair, if they have any left, buckle on their white waistcoats, put on gray pantaloons, clean gloves, and shiny boots, and lead up to the sacrificial altar some pretty girl (not without a fortune), thirty or forty years younger than themselves. Now observe the inscrutable ways of an over-ruling destiny. The princess leads the usual

Palermitan life, and never fails to add to the husband's felicity by presenting him in due course with an heir, which proves to demonstration the advantage of allowing the fruit to ripen; there seems to be no harm therefore in biding our time.

Of course we attended the carnival balls, preceding Lent, given by the 'casinos' or clubs. Nothing can be less like an English than an Italian club, by the way. We all know the look and the feel of the 'Megatherium' or 'Polyanthus:' well warmed, densely carpeted, no footfall to be heard; grave, not to say serious, servants in livery; armchairs that embrace and bury you; every newspaper under the sun, every periodical known, all the new novels and pamphlets; nothing for show or glitter, everything for comfort and use; the writing-room with endless stationery; in the coffee-room, well-cooked meats, choice wines, requisite tea and coffee—everything the best of its kind, perfectly and promptly served; after dark, steady oil-lamps and wax-candles.

Such is the London club, as we all know it; the home of many a homeless man, the refuge from many a domestic storm, and for many a widowed or unmated heart; the kindest friendliest invention of a philanthropic age. The ideal of a club in Italy is a very different affair. Here we have the first-floor of a splendid marble palace, as cold and comfortless as huge be-mirrored and be-gilded rooms, unfastenable windows, uncarpeted stone floors, and allegory-covered vaulted ceilings can make you. It is true, the morning or reading room exists, but in a very rudimentary

state; the appliances for writing are limited to a degree, only consisting of some very thick yellowish ink, and an odd sheet or two of old notepaper in an empty blotting-book; newspapers to the extent of four or five, and of a flimsy attenuated character, make up, with some cane-bottomed chairs, the appointments of the apartment.

Here, no cheery little dinner is ever cooked or eaten; billiards and cards are a good deal played, and light refreshments may be taken; but the final cause for the existence of an Italian club is the giving of balls.

Two or three times a year the rooms are brilliantly lighted, satin-damask curtains and furniture uncovered; and thither the members flock, with or without their female belongings, as the case may be, to disport 'upon the light fantastic.' The dresses of the women are costly and gorgeous; the Sicilian nobility, in their way, are rich, and their jewels are often magnificent heirlooms. The ladies of Palermo are generally handsome, but as a rule run stout, and dress with the utmost extravagance, both as to material and style. Nothing can be seen like it in Pimlico, which is saying something, nor can we pretend to the audacious cynicism of these ladies with respect to the cardinal virtues. Their looks are bold to a degree, such as we associate rather with the Roman imperial times than with the present. In Catholic countries there is no divorce, and public opinion in Palermo is in no way hostile to the infraction of the seventh or any other commandment. A lady can lose nothing, whatever happens; and so a good

many things do happen, enough to cut out work for Lord Penzance, held he a court there, to the end of his days. I do not think I exaggerate; it would be difficult, if not impossible, to overrate the profligacy of these fine ladies.

The men are as fat as their wives, but without their good looks. We saw at the last ball of the season five hundred big-barrelled, bald-headed old fellows, looking like over-fed vultures, to a hundred ladies waiting for the opening of the supper-room. The rush was terrific; we thought the house was on fire. Half an hour afterwards I found them at the supper-table, quietly and deliberately gorging, whilst their stout partners were sitting on the brocaded-satin benches, waiting for them.

How the swells manage to pass their lives, is a problem that beats us. They do nothing, they have no sports, and I am credibly informed that they are incredibly illiterate; they have no public life, and not much domestic. The prince (most men who are not in trade are princes) inhabits one suite of rooms in a vast palace, the princess another; and they meet at dinner perhaps. After dinner he takes her to the drive in an open carriage, or accompanies her to the opera, unless some one else does it for him. 'After the opera is over' they retire to the house or houses of their friends (princes and princesses equally with themselves), there to stay chatting and smoking cigarettes till the small hours; then home and *da capo*. The traditions of a court exist, traditions of a Spanish court, and then of a Bourbon. We do not want to prose or moralise, for

our prosing might not be read and our moralities might not be heeded, but we cannot help asking with Artemus Ward, 'Why this thus-ness?' The answer is simple; the Roman Catholic religion, which in other places has done, and still does much to restrain, in Sicily is well-nigh dead. Half the churches are tumbling down for want of common repair. Many are secularised and turned into barracks. Palermo, which was a stronghold of the Church, is now, perhaps, as godless a place as any in Europe. The municipal council have, in many cases, cut away the steps that led from the street up to the church-doors, on the ground that they interfered with traffic, and they have left the entrances stranded high and dry, ten feet above the heads of the people on the footways. This is, of course, a reaction from the extravagant usurpation of power by the Church in a past age, but could not have taken place unless it had been in unison with the feelings of the great mass of the people. All the monasteries and convents of Palermo are emptied of their occupants and turned to other purposes, for which generally they are very ill-suited. One is a museum, another an academy of fine arts, many are transformed into *casernes*, and the soldiers' beds stand in the chapel, whilst a sentry paces before the door. A few years more will see many of the ecclesiastical buildings of Italy in ruins; in another age or two they will be heaps of brickbats. We read in London papers of the progress in Italy, a going forward—we should like to know in what direction! The 'Rake's Progress' is well known, and how he went forward, and to what end!

Life and property are less safe than they were, taxation is enormously increased, poverty and crime rampant, the freedom of the press nominal, representation a farce, speculation and public robbery unchecked. On the other side, the art of reading is more widely diffused; but whether this be a good or an evil depends chiefly on what is read. One thing is too evident, that the Christian religion is not progressing in Sicily.

So much for social life in Palermo. On the whole, and after mature deliberation, we prefer that of Pimlico for a permanence; and shall return to it in due time. Meanwhile, as to the aspect pictorially, architecturally, historically, and so forth of Palermo, a much better idea of it can be got out of Murray than we, with our only occasional gleams of intelligence, and isolated flashes of humour, can hope to afford.

There is one personal experience, however, of a curiosity of the district which we must not omit, notwithstanding our reference to the eminent cicerone of Albemarle-street. The bone-cave of Santo Ciro, having come under our immediate inspection, shall receive the advantage of special comment at our hands. About a mile and a half outside the 'Straits' gate of the city stands the hamlet from which this natural curiosity takes its name. This hamlet is a mere cluster of labourers' cottages gathered round a little country church at the foot of one of the chain of mountains, which, enclosing the plain of Palermo in a semicircle of limestone heights, gives rise to its title of 'The Golden Shell.' The plain is a perfect dead level up to the very

foot of the hills. The mountain's actual foot is, as commonly occurs, hidden by a *taillis* or slope of débris, earth, and stones (which have fallen or been washed from the heights), at the top of which, perhaps about one hundred feet from the bottom, and in the face of the compact limestone cliff, there exists a cave. The sides of it are wave-worn. For thousands of years the sea lapped or thundered round this cavern, in and out, in and out, as we may see it any day doing in similar places at home on the Devon and Cornish coasts. Then came a move, and the mountain-range was lifted up bodily some two hundred feet above the rush of the waves, and with this mighty convulsion of the earth the floor of the sea appeared. The cave was there, wave-made and wave-worn, a house, a shelter at least, for any one to occupy. A race of creatures, living, air-breathing, eating, drinking, digesting, found and made it their home for ever so long a time. They lived in it, they lay down in it, and they died in it. Their flesh was eaten or otherwise dispersed, but their bones and teeth remained, and their descendants continued to live on in the old family mansion. They, in their turn, lay down and died, and the heap grew.

The cave does not seem to have offered in any way a dry or comfortable abode. A pretty general dripping from the roof, of a calcareous or glutinous fluid, bound these bones and teeth together; however, the dwellers were not over particular about damp beds, and the spot lost none of its popularity, and seems to have been used for many, many centuries, at least for so long as to

make a bone-bed twenty or thirty feet thick. They must have been an odd family party! We saw and picked up teeth of lions, tigers, or equally large carnivora; elephants' tusks, bones, and teeth of dogs, bears, and deer. We cannot but suppose the last came here much against the grain, and were eaten by those with whom we find them united in death. What a lot of growling and gnawing has gone on in that cave! One can hardly imagine man was then on the earth at all; certainly not in Sicily, or we could scarcely have failed to find some bone, or tooth, or remnant of his existence. Plenty of room for speculation here; and so speculating, as we returned to the plain and passed near a railway cutting where some native navvies were at work, we made inquiries of them about the aforesaid 'golden shell.' The story we gleaned was substantially the same as that laid bare by the cave itself. Beneath a rich alluvial bed, about two feet thick, there lay, to a depth far beyond what I had the means of exploring, a rock composed of shell-sand and sea-shells, all similar in species to those existing now in the waters of the Bay of Palermo. I picked out several perfectly preserved. The road led across a little stream, the Oreto, which has cut out a deep wide bed, quite a valley, through the soft rock. This valley has been made since the emergence of the plain from the sea, *i.e.* since the waves lapped in and out of the cave, and the alluvial soil must have been deposited on the substratum of rock since its emergence, for there are no shells in the soil, which there would have been had it

been deposited whilst yet under water. The soil has been washed down from the mountains, probably within the historical period, two thousand years or more, and in consequence of the destruction of the forests.

Wonders these surely! and interesting; but there are many more round and about Palermo, physical as well as social, upon which we have not much space to descant, and which could not be dreamed of in the wide philosophy of Pimlico; wonders quite sufficiently enticing to have repaid us or anybody for a journey from that respectable south-western district of the planet's metropolis, and the record of a single other experience shall bring this gossip to a conclusion.

The eastern headland of the Bay of Palermo is called Cape Zafferana, a rugged limestone hill split in two. On one portion there once stood, but now lies buried, a ruined Grecian city, buried, as in the case of the 'golden shell,' under the soil washed down from the heights above. Some few streets and houses have been dug out, after the plan adopted at Pompeii, and the sun once more shines upon the pavements. The best bit, to our thinking, thus exposed is a little Doric temple with three or four columns, an angle of entablature, and a moulded cornice. Then there is a wide steep street of broad flags, a nice brick-paved terrace-walk overlooking the sea, with sockets here and there for awning-poles; an altar, a draped marble statue with shoes not unlike Indian moccasins, which the country guide called 'un santo,' but which was assuredly no god (gods never wearing shoes), but the effigy of some city magnate.

Behind the temple there is a narrow stone stair, leading up to the priests' own rooms; a few yards off, a good private house (some of the rooms with walls yet gay with paintings and the floors with mosaics); farther on, a baker's shop, with stone kneading-troughs, and the oven still showing traces of fire and smoke. The peace and calm of the place fell like sweet music, and took the mind back to the scene once so full of bustling throbbing life. In our fancy we saw the subtle Greek on the street flags, chaffering and cheating, the toiling slaves bearing burdens up the narrow steep lanes, the pretty girls in *chiton* and *peplum* pacing the terrace under the awnings, the flour-smirched baker at his door, the young lady at the window of her room, the priest mysterious within the little temple, children rolling about and playing games—but, lo, a railway whistle disturbs our dream, and all are gone; gone as they were to total oblivion before Pompeii was laid in ashes, or Glaucus and Ione loved. Hardly anything is known about this place beyond that Carthaginians built and Greeks lived in it; and Romans came and sacked it, leaving nothing behind that was worth carrying off.

We had a pleasant picnic here, and gathered some leaves of the sumach, a plant well known throughout Sicily, and used for dyeing and tanning. The sprigs we gathered were growing with young wheat and acres of cactus over other buried streets and houses. Towards evening the falcon screamed over head, and then a great clear voice rang out of the deep blue, 'Cwank,

cwank, cwank!' and, behold, a flight of long-necked, long-legged cranes slowly wheeling round and round in solemn conclave before starting on their northward journey.

The sun was yet an hour above the horizon; they knew their business, and could afford to wait a little longer; so they wheeled and wheeled, uttering now and again a solemn cwank! then forming into a wedge-shaped mass, away they sailed due north, over the sea, with the sun going down on their left wing. Without compass, sextant, or chronometer, away they go; but the route to and from Germany they learned long since, long before either Carthaginian or Greek watched them from this same spot go through this same performance three thousand years ago, and named them *geranoi* (cranes), and knew that spring was come. The word is the same, and has outlived the stone, the marble, even almost the memory of the city; nothing so durable as speech.

Once again the railway whistle shrieks from the plain below, the hateful locomotive once again disturbs our dream, and whirls us back in thought to Pimlico; but 'great Orion' peeps out, and shines above Palermo, as we reënter for the present the city gates.

MY LAST NIGHT IN THE OLD COUNTRY.

Long before the huge hotel and Charing-cross Terminus of the South-Eastern Railway had risen so imposingly at the western end of the Strand, an event happened on that site, which, strange and terrible as it was, would have become a stirring episode at the Central Criminal Court, had not the imperative and immediate departure from England of a most important witness delayed the solution of the mystery until the occurrence had all but passed out of men's minds, and the death of an obscure waif of humanity had removed all possibility of the retributive justice of the law.

Hungerford Market was not approached from the Surrey side of the river by the suspension-bridge even, at the time of which I write; and many and confused, tumble-down and rickety, were the tenements which fronted or backed upon the river, where I am told the massive piers and arches of the railway now stand. There are several reasons why a too minute description of the exact spot should not be given; but my purpose will be served, if the nature and character of the locality be indicated.

I lodged in rooms which looked out upon the river in the front, and at the back upon a small sort of yard

belonging to a public-house called the Fife and Drum, situated in an adjoining alley. This hostelry was not frequented by a very reputable class, but by a mixture of the low waterside population, itinerant musicians, jugglers, Punch-and-Judy men, and mountebanks of every description. Brawls and rows sometimes went on there far into the night, and rendered the establishment by no means a pleasant neighbour. But it suited me to live where I did, and as it was not to be for long, I bore the occasional inconvenience rather than undergo the trouble of moving. Moreover, the situation was pleasant, and at times very quiet; for there was no thoroughfare for vehicles, of course, as the street, at the river end of which stood the house in which I lodged, terminated by an iron railing. The hay and coal barges, during high tides, were raised sometimes within a few feet of the pavement here, when the small mud-larks of urchins about the place would establish a highway through the bars, backwards and forwards between street and boats. There was a short cut to my door from the adjoining street by the alley where the public-house was, and in making it, I often had an opportunity of studying the manners and customs in private life of the be-spangled and flesh-tighted tumblers, who, in those days more frequently than now, I believe, were to be seen in the London streets, mounting on each other's shoulders, or clambering up a pole supported by one of their fellows. Not a very profitable study perhaps this, but it was one that fascinated me, and set me thinking; and I could not fail at

last to become acquainted, by sight, with many of the leading stars of this nomadic profession, who, all in turn, seemed for a time to be my neighbours.

The public performances, too, of these artistes, and, indeed, all street entertainments, had ever been a source of attraction to me. My boyish tastes had lingered on into manhood, and I therefore submitted to my proximity to the home of these gentry with rather a better grace perhaps than most people would have done. As the days lengthened, and windows were kept more constantly open, scraps of their conversation would reach me when in my bedroom, which, being at the back, as I have said, looked out upon the rear of the Fife and Drum. The talk was never very edifying, perhaps, to ears polite, but it was always amusing to me, and gave me an insight into the character of a curious, although a rather worthless, set of people. By the time, however, that midsummer had arrived, my stay in England was drawing to a close. In a week more I should be on my way to the Antipodes, and my mind began now to be far too full of the future to give much heed to the petty squabbles of the poor miserable street tumblers. Nearly all my connections and friends had emigrated, and done well, so that, at the time I was leaving, scarcely any one in London knew me, except my landlady, and when I too should have departed her notion of my whereabouts would have been of the vaguest. Australia was my future address, and as I expected no letters which would require forwarding, I gave her no nearer clue to my future home.

The last night in the old country has arrived. All my preparations are complete. I have to leave very early in the morning to catch a train for Liverpool. Good-bye has been said, bills have been paid, and with a small hand-bag, the only portion of my *impedimenta* not sent forward, I am to quit the house before any one is astir. It is intensely hot. The days are at their longest, and dawn is almost breaking ere I rise from the open window of my sitting-room, where I have been gazing out upon the silvery river, wondering what fortunes will betide before I again look upon the huge city.

I have been speculating, now that it has come to the last hours, upon the policy of the step that I am taking. Animated by conflicting emotions, hoping yet doubting, full of sanguine anticipations, mingled with painful regrets, I have worked myself into anything but a sleepful state. Pipe after pipe has been smoked, and the approaching daylight alone has recalled me to a sense of the necessity of going to bed at all. I do so at last, however; but as my noisy neighbours, for a wonder, are perfectly quiet, and as the heat is overwhelming, I leave the window looking out upon the little yard wide open, despite its proximity to the foot of my bed. I hear St. Paul's and the myriad other clocks one after another, and some all together, strike three, and it is broad daylight ere I drop off to sleep. I begin to dream, immediately awake with a start, close my eyes, drop off, dream again—this time a very bad dream. I fancy I am at sea; I climb high into the

rigging of the ship, crawl out to the end of one of the yards, try to stand up, lose my footing, and fall quite gently and pleasantly, and, as it seems, into the sea. I begin to swim, but can make no progress; my arms and legs move with difficulty. I catch hold of a rope which has been thrown to me; another instant, and I shall be safe!—when, ugh! horrible sensation! The cold nose of a shark touches my foot, and in a paroxysm of anguish I wake myself with the effort to draw my leg up out of the way.

Yes, I awake; at first with a sense of relief that it is only a dream, but a strange sort of cold shiver passes through me. The next moment a renewed and unaccountable anxiety is upon me again. Am I ill? I sit upright, trying to collect my scared wits, believing almost that I am still dreaming, when a large dark ominous-looking mark upon the white counterpane at the foot of the bed, which was not there before, catches my eye. I spring out to examine it, and to my horror find that it is the imprint, in blood and dirt, of a human hand.

A closer observation verifies this fact, and on the window-sill I see even a more glaring token of the same kind. Shuddering, I throw the sash wider open and look out. The drain-pipe which runs from the roof down the side of the house, close to my window, bears, as high up as where I stand, scratches and stains, showing to my now preternaturally sharpened senses that some one has recently gained an entrance by that way to my room. I gaze around it. The bright

morning sun is now streaming straight in, and as I instinctively stoop to look under the bed, I see evidence of footprints as far as the door leading on to the staircase. I try to open it, but it is locked on the outside. Bewildered, but not losing my presence of mind, I go through by the folding-doors into my sitting-room overlooking the river. The tide is high, and as I crane forward out of the window to catch a glimpse of the end of the street, a man is in the act of dropping from the iron railings there on to one of the barges. I cannot see his face, for in another second he is running and jumping with the agility of a cat from one boat to another, and is suddenly lost to my view behind a huge load of hay. My first impulse is to shout, but I am quickly checked by the striking of the clocks, and as I count five, remember that I should be in another ten minutes on my way to the railway station.

The truth flashes across me, that if I give an alarm I shall be detained, lose my train and ship, and all the prospects upon which I have built so many earnest hopes will be lost to me for ever. I dare not hesitate. Whatever dark mystery I have thus unwittingly come upon must be cleared up by others, not by me!

Dressing in the direst haste, I pass out on to the landing by my front-room door, which is not locked.

'Who's that?' cries the well-known voice of my landlady, from above.


'Only I. Good-bye, Mrs. Hart, once more.'

'Dear me! I thought I heard you go a quarter of an hour ago; somebody went down-stairs!'

‘It was not I; but I am late as it is. Good-bye again and again!’

I cannot even give her a hint of what has happened, for doing so will cause fatal delay to me. I must risk all consequences to save my train, so I pass down the stairs, and out by the street-door, which I see has been left ajar. Not a soul is stirring; I take a farewell look at the old quarters, and rush away through the bright but silent streets to Euston-square, carrying with me unavoidably a load of dreadful and hideous suspicions, which years and years do not efface.

Prosperity in Australia followed my every act, and by the time the sequel to ‘my last night in the Old Country’ was worked out, I was living in very different quarters from those by the riverside at Hungerford Market. Again, I need not particularise too minutely the locality. To intimate that I was well established in Melbourne as a merchant, and that I walked to and fro between my suburban villa and my office daily, is sufficient. The old inclination to stop and watch all shows and street performances was as strong as ever, and, laudably or not, I never failed, as the profession expressed it, to ‘encourage talent;’ but, at that time, there were but few of the ‘tumbling’ fraternity to be seen in our thoroughfares. They are the result of an overgrown population, and do not flourish much in the open air in a country where men of thews and sinews are often almost worth their weight in gold. The theatres and circus monopolised such acrobatic and



dramatic genius as the soil produced; but occasionally the mild performances of dancing on stilts, or the exhibiting an accomplished monkey, might be met with.

When therefore, one afternoon as I was returning home, I saw a large crowd assembled, and a huge pole rising from its midst, it is not to be supposed I passed by on the other side. A good deal of shouting and drum-beating was going on, and as I came up, I discovered that the pole was balanced and supported in the socket of a leathern belt, passed round the loins of a sturdy acrobat. Another of the tribe, slighter in figure, was preparing to ascend this sort of mast, and did so, even as I watched. It was the old trick which I had witnessed many a time before in England; but I do not remember that it was then dignified, as it has since been, by the high-sounding name of 'la perche.' When the mountebank had reached the top of the pole, he exhibited several feats of daring and strength, such as we are all familiar with; but at last he assumed, when at the utmost height, the attitude of a man swimming, supporting himself with one arm and hand, whilst his stomach rested on the top of the pole, so that, in fact, man and pole together formed the letter T. Then he began to strike out with his legs and disengaged arm, whilst the balancer of the pole beneath walked round and round in a small circle. It was not badly done; the balance and position were steadily maintained for several minutes. The drums and Pandean pipes were played with an air of noisy triumph, and a murmur of

applause arose from the crowd, as they stood gaping at the perilous performance with upturned faces.

Presently the acrobat was just above where I was standing. I had at that moment removed my hat the easier to watch him. He appeared to observe my action, and our eyes met. Then suddenly he gave a sort of jerk, seemed to lose his balance, tried to recover himself, failed, and, in a second, fell straight down upon the ground head foremost, the pole at the same time also escaping from the grip of the holder!

A terrific shout and a scene of wild excitement followed. The pole had, in its descent, felled several of the spectators like oxen, and they and the unhappy tumbler, who was apparently dead, were eventually carried off to the hospital.

Two days later, I was seated by the side of one of the small beds in the accident ward. On it lay the crushed and maimed but yet living acrobat. I had called the next morning to inquire after the sufferers, and had been told that this man was hopelessly injured in the spine, but that he might live for some weeks, though he could never move his legs again. His intellect, it was thought, had also sustained a shock; for when he recovered his speech, he appeared to wander, and had talked about having been frightened; frightened by a ghost that he had seen in the crowd, which had taken its hat off to him, and had threatened him with its eyes. My action immediately recurred to me. I explained to the surgeon that *I* had taken my hat off the moment before the poor fellow fell, and I asked to

be allowed to speak with him ; for a strange anomalous feeling took possession of me. I felt at once compassion for, and a curious repugnance towards, him. I was both irresistibly attracted to and repelled from that bedside.

‘I fear from what they tell me,’ I began, ‘that I was in some way the cause of your losing your balance ; that by taking my hat off, I drew your attention from—’

‘No, no!’ hastily interrupted the sufferer, turning his haggard pale face and wild eyes upon me. ‘No, it wasn’t *that*. Many people take their hats off, but they haven’t all got faces like yours ! They haven’t all been sent straight across here from England ; they don’t all bring back times as I’d wish to forget ! They don’t all seem to say to me as yours did, “I know what you’ve done ! I saw you just after you did it ! I’ll have you hanged for it !” They don’t all say this to me ;’ and he looked anxiously round to see whether the nurse and surgeon were within hearing. Finding that they were not, and that indeed we were quite by ourselves, and closely shut in by a screen in a corner of the ward, he resumed in a whisper :

‘I heard ’em say as I couldn’t live long, and if so be that’s true, I’d like to tell you what has lain heavy on my mind these six years past. If you be him as I suspect you are, you must have been sent on purpose to make me say what I believe no other man could ever have made me say. Your face made me miss my tip, and now I seems to feel as if it was a kind o’ justice brought upon me ; and if I am to die, you can’t do me

more harm than you have, and my mind will be the easier.'

He stretched out his thin but muscular hand and laid it on my arm, which was now trembling with a renewal of the old, horrible, long-haunting suspicion.

'This is not the first time as I've had my hand on you,' continued the man; 'and it's well for you you didn't move then as much as you are doin' now, or there might have been two to answer for instead of one! Put your ear down close, quite close. I climbed into your bedroom just after I'd done it—just after I'd paid off old scores with Tom Smart; just after I'd murdered him down there in the tap-room of the Fife and Drum, there by Hungerford Market. I and he were sleeping there; he'd got more than a month's swag lying under his head, for he was a regular miser, and he had never so much as given me a tenth part of our earnings for weeks. I grew savage as I saw it there right within my reach; and he, seemingly, so dead asleep; but I never meant to murder him! No, I never did; only when he caught hold of me just as I'd got it, and saw what my game was, he'd have strangled me like a dog if I hadn't caught up a knife that was lying on the table, and driven it straight into his throat. He dropped like a stone, and the blood spurted all over my hands! Then, when I saw what I'd done, I knew I must get off somehow. So I crept out into the yard, and I was like a rat in a pit; but I saw a window open just above, and I swarmed up the drain-pipe, feeling sure I could get out there somehow. As I was a-stepping into the room

I stumbled, and trying to save myself, put my hand right on your foot before I knew it. Then, for the first time, I saw there was some one in the bed. The sun shone straight on your face, or else I shouldn't have remembered it so well; and I thought you was a-going to wake, for you drew your legs up quite quick, but you never opened your eyes; and maybe, it's well for you you didn't; and so I got away and locked your door to make all safe. I crept down-stairs, and out into the street, and nipped over on to the barges, and was never taken! No, nor so much as ever suspected! I found my way to the docks, managed to get aboard a ship that was dropping down the river that day, bound for this country, and hid myself (a stowaway they called me) till we got to sea. They threatened to throw me overboard, but I showed them I was strong and active; they let me help them, and we was all good friends at parting. Hereabouts I've been ever since, in the old line, but I've had a hard time of it in my mind, and have been well-nigh mad more than once, it preyed so on me. I've been going to give myself up over and over again, for I could not bear my thoughts; and I see poor old Tom night after night sometimes, just as I left him. Then all of a sudden comes your face, for I knew it again, ah! just at once! I turned reg'lar giddy, I lost my hold, and remember nothing more till I found myself in this bed.'

Here, then, was that horrible imprint on the foot of my bed accounted for. The cold nose of the shark, and the whole surroundings of that terrible dream,

had been suggested to my sleeping brain by the single and instantaneous touch of the murderer's hand on my foot. The incidents, which appeared to cover a considerable time, had been engendered in and flashed through my mind with that lightning-like rapidity which constitutes the greatest wonder of dreamland. It was well, indeed, for me that I did not immediately awake, as I supposed I had done, or with such a desperate character as this man then was standing over me, that night might not only have been 'my last in the old country,' but my last on earth. The miserable but repentant criminal died suddenly the day after he had made his confession to me. I told the authorities all about it, and they duly communicated with those of Scotland-yard. The mysterious murder, naturally, had created much excitement in the neighbourhood at the time of my departure, but the obscurity of the wretched victim, and the absence of any clue to the perpetrator of the deed, beyond the marks on the drain-pipe and in my room, showing the manner of his escape, together with the impossibility of finding me, allowed it to merge into that oblivion which has encompassed so many other crimes of the same kind.


My presence, however, on the scene of the acrobat's final performance had acted as a Nemesis, and had avenged the murder perhaps more terribly than if it had been dealt with by the hands of the law.

PAINTERS' PERILS.

WE determined to shoulder our knapsacks and start off into North Wales by the Great Western Railway, and go as far as it would take us. After spending a pleasant time wandering by the Wye, we took seats one very wet morning on the mail-coach from Hereford to Aberystwith, which we resolved to make our head-quarters for the main object of our expedition, viz. the bringing back a folio of sketches.

One of our first excursions was, naturally, to the Devil's Bridge, a well-known spot some few miles inland from the coast. We tramped out there, secured our quarters at the comfortable inn, and immediately started, with all the enthusiasm for which in those days we were both celebrated, to explore and mark down the choicest localities and picturesque points where we might best avail ourselves of what talent we had in the use of brush or pencil.

It is a vain speculation, I imagine, endeavouring to find out why the devil has built so many bridges, scooped out so many punch-bowls, dykes, basins, and bays, or driven his spade and pickaxe into so many chasms and passes; but certain it is, that he has had a



considerable hand in moulding some of the boldest and most paintable parts of the world, if we are to take the fact of his name being associated with them as a proof that they were the results of his superintendence.

I will not stop to recapitulate even some of those most familiar to travellers and artists; all that is necessary for me now to do is to describe slightly the nature of this particular record of Satan's skill and handiwork. At the time of which I am speaking, and when my old chum, Michael Hallidown, and I were a good many years younger, this spot seemed to be a very devilish sort of place indeed. 'Awfully wild and grand;' 'A wonderful place for sketching,' and other rapturous ejaculations were poured forth, characteristic of the aforesaid enthusiasm. We had not been over the St. Gothard then, nor caught a glimpse of the thousand and one far wilder and more picturesque localities bearing his Satanic Majesty's cognomen. Knowing nothing better, it did well enough for us, and certainly the freshness of our enjoyment was ample compensation for our ignorance. It was a bliss never surpassed by all our increased artistic powers and wider knowledge of fine scenery.

We have been for many sketching and walking trips since then, but we have never had a jollier time. It is the old story, and the 'Devil's Bridge' near Aberystwith, viewed through the medium of our youth and vigour, was magnified into all that was requisite for our happiness. Green peas, I suppose, have still the same flavour to fellows of one-and-twenty that they

have ever had ; the houris of the ballet must still appear the priceless pearls we then thought them ; but clap another score of years upon our heads—the peas are *fade*, and the opera-dancers very ordinary paste,—a spurious imitation, which the microscope of time enables us easily to detect from the genuine jewel. And so the ‘Devil’s Bridge’ was delightful.


We descended the wood-clad ravine, which led down to the rocky mountain stream, whose waterfall, at the farthest limit of our view, came sparkling, dancing, gurgling, and dashing, and doing much of what Southey said the water does at Lodore. This, we conceived, would be the most attractive feature for a sketch, and to get a view of it from a good point of vantage was our main object. We reached the bed of the river, and found no difficulty in crossing from side to side, by hopping, skipping, and jumping upon the big boulders and rocks, that, from the comparative low state of the stream, were exposed in masses of various size and form, round which the waters gurgled and eddied bright, and glittering, and with a music new and delightful to our ears.

The fall itself was a meagre affair after all, but pretty enough to look at ; we had not then learned that, as a rule, waterfalls do not make good pictures. But what had we learned ? Why, this was almost the very first time that either of us had ever seen a mountain stream, and it would have been rather strange if, loving Nature as we did, we should not have eagerly desired to bring a reminiscence of it away.

The rocky ledge over which the water poured was not above half covered, but it was very pretty, and the vista leading up to it, shut in by steeply-shelving crags, surmounted by young ash and oak trees, here and there almost arching across it, formed a lovely framework to the central point of light. We explored the spot thoroughly, and found, in most places, that the banks of the river were so precipitous as to be inaccessible, and, having gone down its course some distance, we came upon the top of a second waterfall deeper than the first, and a place that we felt it would be by no means pleasant to take a 'header' over.

We were obliged to retrace our steps across the straggling boulders before we could regain the upper bank, where the path lay through the wood by which we had descended. In fact, upon closer search, we discovered that it was nearly the only place where it was possible to reach the stream itself, so closely was it shut in by rock and wood. The well-worn path brought us with such little difficulty to this point of access that we were scarcely conscious of the trouble we might have had to get down to the water if we had not struck this particular way.

We at last determined on the place from which we would make our sketch. It was one of the largest flat-top table-like sort of rocks, nearly in the centre of the stream, and easily reached by aid of some half dozen stepping-stones. This would do capitally; the composition and effect were perfect, and we made up our minds to set to work upon this pet subject early next



morning, with that determination which the youthful aspirant to the noble art of painting is known to possess.

As soon as it was light the following day, Mike came to me with the most forlorn expression of countenance.

'It rains like mad, my dear fellow—coming down in torrents; not a chance of putting your head outside the door for the next twenty-four hours, I can tell you; what a country this is for rain! I shall go to bed again.'

Mike was not good at early rising, and it was nothing but his artistic enthusiasm which could have torn him from his bed so soon after dawn to look at the state of the weather. Yes, it was a soaker, but it could not damp our ardour; and when, a little before noon, the clouds began to lift, and rays of sunshine glittered across the hill-sides, lighting up the valley which lay in all its autumnal beauty at our feet, we made preparations for a start.

Burning to get to work, we were soon on our way, heavily laden with necessary and unnecessary paraphernalia, to take up the position we had settled on the day before. Very spongy was the ground, and though it had ceased raining, the brisk wind, as it drifted heavy masses of the remnants of the rain-clouds across the sky, also besprinkled us pretty freely with water from the shimmering leaves. Arrived on the bank from which our bit of table-land was accessible, we were somewhat dismayed to find our stepping-stones of yesterday not nearly so numerous, nor so much exposed. The river had risen, but we thought nothing

of this, and with only a slight addition here and there to the length of our strides, and an occasional foot-wetting, without much difficulty we reached our station in the middle of the stream before described. Here we unlimbered, arranged our stools side by side, got out frames and blocks, and commenced our labour in earnest. The scene looked far finer than it had done on our previous visit. There was more water coming over the fall, and the ever-changing clouds and sunshine gave an immense variety to the light and shade, which though puzzling to the painter, yet greatly enhanced the attractions of the spot. Mike and I worked pretty equally, and had finished our pencil outline much about the same time, when a passing shower obliged us to seek temporary refuge under our sketching umbrellas, which we had left on the bank, for it was of course impossible to stick them in the hard rock where we were sitting. We got rather more wet-footed this time in going to and fro, but neither of us seemed to notice that the river was still rising. Glorious sunshine burst out after the rain, and we were soon again intent on our drawing, perfectly undaunted by the dripping condition of everything around us.

We chatted away gaily enough, making mild juvenile jokes about this being a sketch in water-colours indeed; and that Winsor & Newton need not have spent so much time in perfecting their moist cakes, if they were to be used in Wales, &c. The rock on which we sat had a smooth level top, about four feet long by three

broad, admirably adapted for our little settlement. We had our materials scattered about us; our pipes were laid down at our side until wanted again; the colour-box, water-bottle, &c., quite handy to our reach. There was no more rain now; the sun began to dry up the superabundant moisture; the wind dropped, and the weather settled into one of those warm, pleasant, quiet autumnal afternoons, when sketching out of doors becomes, to my thinking, the most enjoyable occupation in the world.

Mike, who seldom or never looks at Nature when he is painting (though he thinks he does), if we may judge from the result, was poring over his paper with nose almost on its surface, 'pin-fiddling,' as we used to call it, when niggling very much. I myself had been working for the last few minutes at a corner of my sketch, and had not noticed the waterfall for some little time. Suddenly, glancing up at it, I was amazed, and cried out, 'By jingo, old fellow, look at the fall now; that's the way we must have it. That's something like a waterfall, if you please!'

It had increased tenfold; one huge boiling sheet of brown peat-coloured foam came shooting over the full extent of the gap through which the stream at its highest level rushed from the mountains. It was now strikingly grand; but our admiration for the sight which had brought us simultaneously to our feet, drawing-boards in hand, was short-lived, for Mike, more observant of what would follow than I, pointed to the water just below us, saying,


‘We must look sharp and get out of this, or else we shall be washed away!’

‘Yes,’ I replied; ‘but how are we to do it?’ for as I spoke I saw that all our stepping-stones had disappeared, and the foaming seething mass was tearing savagely all around us.

Seated as we had been, only some twenty yards away from the fall thus suddenly swollen, we perceived that the river had of course immediately been influenced by the extra supply poured into it; the result was, that as we spoke, and looked about bewildered, the water rose like magic to our feet.

In far less time than it has taken to write these words, it was half-way up the sides of our table-rock, and every instant brought it horribly nearer to the top. As we turned and looked hopelessly from side to side for some means of retreat, the bubbling bottled-porter-like fluid wetted our boots. Together we stooped to make a grab at the colour-boxes; as we did this, an extra swirl washed them out of our reach, and they disappeared in a second.

Being certain at the least of a ducking, and instinctively feeling that my sketch must be saved, if possible, from such a contingency, with a desperate effort I flung it high up into the trees and brushwood on the bank by which we had descended, which lay just abreast of our rock. It was only a stone's throw, and the board fell with a bit of a clatter safely on the shore amongst the trees. Hallidown instantly followed my example, and with like success; but by the time we



had performed this exploit the water was well up round our ankles, rising momentarily higher and higher, lunging at us with such a tearing force that our foothold we could feel was fast giving way.

Something must be done. 'Mike,' I cried, 'help me with this stick' (for by some accident I found my stick in my hand), 'and I'll try and step on to the next stone, towards the shore. I know whereabouts it is, and though deeper down than this, the water won't be above my head; see if you can come too—keep tight hold of the stick.'

The words had scarcely left my lips when, proceeding to carry out my vain intention of striking the nearest stone, my legs were washed from under me, and I was turned head over heels into the deep, boiling, Vandyke-brown-coloured waters, which gurgled in my ears, and glistened in my eyes. I was spun round like a cork, washed away like a fly, and received two or three blows on my body from what I knew to be the rough projecting rocks in and about the bottom of the stream.

Now, fortunately, I was a pretty good water-dog, and so, not losing my presence of mind, things, I suppose, flashed into it with the rapidity of lightning, in a way that they would not otherwise have done, for I can perfectly remember being sensible of the danger there would be of getting stunned if my head came in collision with any of the boulders. Likewise, I remembered also, long before I came to the surface, that there was another and deeper fall but a few hundred yards down the stream.

These were the dangers that really occurred to me, the water as it were appearing quite a secondary consideration. I had no fear of drowning if my senses were not knocked out of me, and I found myself rising with my hands involuntarily held over my head as if to protect it, for it must be borne in mind that I was being carried forward by the rapid at a tremendous pace. It is impossible to describe a tithe of my sensations during the four or five seconds which at the most perhaps elapsed while I was head downwards. With a few more thumps and bumps, especially on the shins and knees, and spinning round in eddies, to the top I came, travelling down the stream more like a cork, as I have said, than anything else.

The second fall which, from my previous exploration of the spot, I knew I was speedily approaching, and which, if I went over, I knew must inevitably finish me, was the source of my great anxiety. Swimming was out of the question. If I attempted to strike out for the shore, as I did at first, my hands and arms came into such instantaneous collision with half or wholly hidden rocks, that I again feared being disabled. It was a moment of extreme peril, for a very few more yards would bring me to the top of the second fall. Just then, when hope seemed utterly flying from me, and I was endeavouring to collect myself, and prepare, if possible, for the big descent, suddenly, and with a tremendous access of power, the water swirled, and spun me round as if I had been a top for a minute or more. As it seemed to me, I was in a regular little

whirlpool, but not very far from one of the precipitous sides of the river. I was in very deep water now, and I made one or two desperate efforts to swim, and from the centre I managed to get to the edge of the whirlpool; then, as if by magic, I found myself in calm water, within arm's length of the aforesaid precipitous side. There was no finger-hold, however, or none that could be called such, but still, with the proverbial desperation of a drowning man clutching at a straw, I did somehow manage to hook my nails into a cranny, and then by great luck got a very slight footing. The water, though up to my shoulders, was not pulling at me now, and I felt able to rest and to look about me.

As I did so, the first thing that met my gaze was Mike coming down the stream, full pelt in my wake. Being a tall big man, twice my size, he had not lost his original footing quite so quickly as I had done, so was a little behind me. The torrent, however, made little less ado with him than it had done with me, and directly he reached the place where the eddy was, he, too, became a helpless cork, gyrating in its midst. I shouted, 'Strike out!' He heard me, and did so, and in another moment was by my side a little lower down the stream, holding on, as the sailors say, by his eyebrows. We had a parley what was to be done. A yard higher or lower than where we were the current would again catch us, and we should be for a second time exposed to the danger of being carried over the other fall. Then occurred one of those ludicrous incidents which I am apt to think do sometimes go hand in hand with

the most imminent peril: indeed, despite its extreme danger, the whole affair had not been devoid of a certain air of comicality. But now we could scarce refrain from grinning silently to each other, as we saw our two caps come whirling down the stream exactly as their owners had done. The eddy caught them, and they were spun round and round for a minute or two, and then floated placidly up alongside of us. I made a grab at mine, caught it, and as if I was not wet enough, gave myself an extra shower-bath, by trying to put it on my head full of water. Then I made a feeble attempt to throw it on the trees, which hung not so very far above us. I failed to effect its lodgment, and it fell for a second time into the rapids. A second time it was swept into the eddy, whirled round as before, and a second time brought up quietly to my side. As if this were not ludicrous enough, precisely the very same thing happened to Mike's wideawake. This time we were determined not to lose them, and jammed them firmly on to our heads.

Still, what was to be done? We could not stay there till the flood subsided; in fact, the chances were it would increase; and sure enough, as we were consulting, it gradually did so, for it soon enabled me, with a plunge and a dash, to gain a firmer resting-place near to some overhanging boughs. I stretched up my hand and could just get hold of a leaf. With the utmost care I pulled it down until I caught a twig, and then a slightly thicker branch, and then a thicker still. I called to Mike to remain quiet, and by degrees I had a firm bough within my grasp. Yet the sides of the rock

were very precipitous, and though not high just here, the earthy top with its protruding roots of trees was much above my reach. Nevertheless, with great caution, I brought the ash sapling well over the face of the little cliff, and, being a light weight, it was luckily strong enough to bear me as I scaled the ascent by its aid.

‘Hurrah!’ we both cried; and I ran to one of the similar young trees which grew just above my friend’s position. This I bent over with equal caution until he could grasp it, but being some stones heavier than I, I was obliged to give him a second one, which eventually he also caught, and with the assistance of the two, and a hand from me, he was at last brought safely on to dry ground.

We congratulated ourselves, and instinctively felt in the breast-pocket of our shooting-coats for the whisky-flasks. They were both gone. So thoroughly had we been turned topsy-turvy that our pockets were emptied as completely as if we had been walking blindfolded through Seven Dials.

There is little more to be said. It was a very narrow and a very lucky escape. Quite certain it is, that although actual swimming was out of the question, yet had we not both been adepts in the art, and thoroughly used to the water, we should inevitably have been drowned.

The presence of mind which we retained from not finding ourselves completely out of our element would have been denied to any but swimmers, and then no-

thing could have saved us. Besides the ducking, a few sharp cuts and bruises, and the loss of all our sketching traps, nothing worse came of our mishap. Nay, we did not lose quite all, for on regaining the bank, where we had thrown our drawings, we found them but little injured; and they remain in both our portfolios, to us interesting relics of this our first experience of landscape-painters' perils in a spot which, had we been superstitious, we might indeed have believed was one where the devil still had sway and influence.

Shall I add the moral? Learn above all things to swim, and never trust the bed of a mountain torrent after heavy rains.

'A WAIF FROM THE SEA.'

I. THE RESCUE.

ONLY one passenger on deck, only one probably on board; for at the best of times the steamships plying between Rotterdam and Lightpool did not depend on human cargoes for their freight, and few people cared to cross the German Ocean in company with oxen, sheep, and pigs, if they could avoid it. And now the times are so far from being at their best, that the skipper of the Van Dunck wonders to find even a single traveller.

Yet on this bleak and dismal Christmas morning there is one, muffled to the eyes, pacing the deck of the lumbering old tub as she forges, cattle-laden, slowly forward on her homeward voyage.

There has been very heavy weather for a week. The ship's departure from the Dutch port has been delayed by it for several days; but taking advantage of a temporary lull, the previous forenoon she put to sea, and was caught in a sudden return of the gale during the night, but which has now again abated as daylight breaks dimly through the sullen leaden sky. With the advance of morning the wind drops entirely; but the sea still runs very high, the swell is tremendous, and the streak of yellow light which marks the eastern horizon is often

hidden from view by the mountains of water, in the midst of which the vessel rolls and labours.

The captain for some time stands alone on the bridge between the paddle-boxes, and is then hastily joined by his solitary passenger, who, by a nervous anxious action, seems endeavouring to draw attention to some object he has descried upon the wilderness of waters. He points earnestly in the direction of the bright light; but the other, failing to see it, shrugs his shoulders, and says curtly,

‘You must have good eyes, sir! I can’t make anything out.’

‘Nay, my good man,’ insists the passenger; ‘why, there it is again! Keep a steady look-out now, as I point when we rise the next time. There! I can swear I see a cluster of something!’

‘Well, it is not of much consequence to us if you do: it will only be some stray spar or bit of wreckage, or something or other that has been carried away in the night. Lor’ bless you, why, lots of things go overboard in such a gale as that, and we see the sea strewn with the like at times.’

‘But will you not bear up to it and find out what it is?’

‘A pretty joke that, sir! that we should go out of our course a quarter of a mile and more to pick up a hen-coop or a water-cask.’

‘But I tell you I’ll swear there’s something alive floating yonder. I could declare almost that just now I saw an arm wave!’

'Alive, sir! why, what would live out there? It's not a boat and it's not a raft: I can barely make out what you mean. I do see a speck of something now and then—but alive!' and the skipper laughed; 'it's not much life they'd have in 'em after such a night as we've had!'

'Still there might have been a wreck, and it is quite possible, I should think, with such a gale. Suppose, now, some fellow-creature is clinging for dear life to a spar—suppose, I say, that it *is* just possible—will you refuse, for the sake of half an hour, to alter your course on the chance of saving a human life? Again, now, as we rose that time I saw it more plainly, and it is drifting nearer to us! At least slacken speed, and it will come across our track in a little while.'

There is prolonged reluctance to yield to the passenger's wishes. A telescope is obtained, and a great deal of scrutinising gone through at every moment which the rising and falling of the vessel makes available. At length a hoarse command or two is given. The vessel's course is slightly altered and her speed slackened. Then the crew hurry to the bows, and clamber up upon the sheep-pens and cattle-stalls which crowd the deck forward.

More orders from the captain, still with the passenger on the bridge; and some of the seamen stand by to lower the lifeboat. Slowly the speck upon the waters drifts towards the vessel, slowly the vessel advances to meet it. Eyes are strained to make it out. A thrill of excitement runs through even the knot of hardy men

upon the deck as each approaching wave lifts them over the intermediate distance, and gradually reveals a human being clinging to a ragged mass of tangled wreckage.

Speedily he is within a few yards of the steamer's bow ; a life-buoy, with running rope attached, is flung to him ; but, being ill-aimed, it falls a little short, and signs are made for him to remain where he is. But, whether from misunderstanding them, or from anxiety, fright, or exhaustion, he lets go his hold on the spar, and strikes out as if to reach the buoy. Then, on a sudden, he throws up both his arms, and sinks never to rise again !

Once more hoarse hurried orders from the captain, and the boat is lowered, and with desperate energy her sturdy crew pull towards the spot. Too late, alas, they reach it ! no sign of the unhappy man appears, row round about the drifting piece of wreck as they will. This now, however, relieved from the weight of him who, but a moment ago, found upon it a safe refuge, has canted over, and so dislodged and cast upon the waters a dog, that, hitherto unobserved, had likewise found a resting-place upon it. The poor beast makes towards the boat, and struggles to get his forepaws over the gunwale ; the sailors pay little heed to him, casting anxious looks in each direction for the lost man. Round and round the spot they row, from time to time holding on to and examining the piece of wreck, until all hope has to be given up. No further sign of life appears save the struggling dog, who, still keeping close to the boat,

follows her to the ship's side, where the davit ropes are being made fast to her, ere she is drawn once again on to the deck, crew and all.

'Take in the dog! in Heaven's name take in the dog!' shouts out the passenger, as, having left his vantage-ground upon the bridge, he now stands looking over the bulwarks upon the boat below. She is lifted a foot or more out of the water by those who haul away upon the deck; the dog is all but out of reach, when a rising wave carries him just within arm's length, and a brawny sailor, obeying the ever-increasing earnestness of the passenger's entreaties, seizes the animal by the neck, and swings him into safety.

'We thought as how we had a'most enough live stock aboard, sir; that's why we didn't think of going for to save him. He's a poor miserable half-starved beast, of no good to any one. You'd better have let him bide, he'd ha' been out of his misery in another minute; and now look at him, see how he's a-suffering! he can't stand even!'

Thus pleads the man, now upon the deck, in extenuation of his apathy towards the dog; and truly there seems some reason in his words, for the poor brute, when first feeling his feet upon the solid planks, staggers and falls, and then makes no effort to get up.

'It 'ud be a mercy to throw him over again, sir, it would indeed! See, he's a'most dead now!'

But once more the passenger intercedes, and, kneeling down and stooping over him, begins to smooth his head and wipe his eyes, and wring the water from his

clotted hair with both hands. Then he takes him in his arms, and, squeezing yet more water from his paws, ears, and tail, carries him to the cook's house, where there is a fire in a little stove, and puts him near it, orders warm milk and bread, and feeds him with it like a child.

Kind-hearted passenger! Had you been asked, or had you stayed to ask yourself, wherefore this solicitude for a half-drowned cur, you would have found sufficient answer in the simple words, 'the common dictates of humanity,' and you could have but little divined the mighty recompense that was in store for you for this good deed. You worked for none, but it came; and may it not have been that even the influence of the spirit of Christmas, then holding sway all over the length and breadth of land and sea, prompted you never to relax a single effort to save the animal's life—prompted you to persevere, against some persuasion to the contrary from the bystanders, in drying, warming, and rubbing the dog, until you felt him lick your hand, and turn on you a look so full of gratitude and promise of devotion, that you thought you had in it all the reward that ever could be yours? You did not know what power that dumb brute would have of repaying you in years to come!

By the time the Van Dunck was at her moorings in Lightpool Harbour that Christmas afternoon, the dumb waif from the sea, now wondrously restored, had been accredited the property of Michael Burt, Esq., solicitor, of the above-named seaport.

'You see, you'd better keep the dog, sir; he ain't a bad 'un, after all, though he did look terrible mean at first, sure-ly! He owes his life to you. I reckon he'll take to you kindly, poor beast! He's what they call a sort o' poodle, I 'spect, or Russian setter like; he's a foreigner, any way, and the poor chap as was on the spar along with him looked foreign too, from the little sight I had of him (though it wasn't for above a moment before he went down). If we had not flung him that life-buoy he'd ha' bided where he was till we picked him up, and then we'd ha' known what ship he come from.'

Thus the chief boatman to Michael Burt, the passenger, and the conclusions arrived at by that gallant seaman were confirmed by time. No hint was ever gleaned of the name or destination of the luckless ship whence man and dog had drifted. No relic, sign, or clue was to be obtained from any of the wreckage floating near, and, without a doubt, she had been lost as many a gallant craft has been, leaving no one to tell the 'how' or 'why.' The two poor waifs had told, and could tell, nothing; the man now, alas, was as dumb as the dog. Nothing that could be gleaned at the port shed any light upon the affair.

And so Michael Burt kept the dog, and the sailor's prediction that the animal would take to him kindly was verified. They took to each other, in fact, as was not wonderful, for Michael, as we have seen, was kind-hearted, and, being a bachelor, welcomed the companionship which chance and his own perseverance had

brought about. He had rebelled and grumbled at the business which took him that wintry weather to Rotterdam, and he had rebelled and grumbled still more when the same wintry weather seemed likely to make him miss his Christmas dinner in his native town. Yet, many a time afterwards, as the dog thrust his nose between his master's knees or into his hand, and licked it, and looked up into his face with the large brown eloquent eyes, as it often seemed, in tearful gratitude, Michael would gently pat him on the head, and say, 'Poor old boy! dear old Waif! I should have been sorry to let you drown. I wonder who you are, and where you come from? O, what a tale you'd have to tell, if only you could speak! Well, well, as I look into your old mug I regret nothing which took me across the sea that Christmas-time.'

Regret it! No, indeed! There was little cause for regret, as you found, Michael Burt, when you were a few years older.

II. THE REWARD.

'LETTER from Michael Burt, Esq., to the Editor of *London Society* :

'Lightpool, Dec. 8th, 1871.

'Sir,—Not long ago it chanced that the affairs of a very dear friend, who had just died, were put into my hands, and, in looking over his papers and manuscripts, I came upon the accompanying portion of a story. I knew he had been in the habit of writing for the maga-

zines and press, and that he never failed to make a note of any striking circumstance or adventure which he either came across or overheard. I was not surprised, therefore, to find that he had availed himself, in his own way, and for his own purpose, of an account I had given him of certain events which actually occurred to me, merely disguising my real name and address. I have reason to believe it was only his rough notion of the beginning of a story, as I could find no sequel to it, and, consequently, have no idea how he intended working it out. I believe, too, it was written almost immediately after I told him the facts, and had been then abandoned or forgotten. However this may be, as the story has a sequel, and a very complete one, but one which he never lived to hear, I thought I would, as simply as may be, tell it myself. I therefore forward to you by this post my friend's manuscript, and my own close to it, believing that you may possibly find them available for your periodical, regretting that I have not the power to continue in his vein, but am reduced to making the narrative simply personal. I enclose my card, but as far as concerns this matter, I wish still to remain, sir, your obedient servant,

'MICHAEL BURT.'

About four years after I had become possessed of the dog, my health obliged me to take a long rest, and in the autumn I went off to Calaiscourt, a little watering-place on our eastern coast. Waif, of course, went with me; we were inseparable. There was only one

thing that would ever induce him to leave my side of his own accord. This was the sea—he hated the very sight of it, and I could never get him to come within two or three hundred yards of the shore, coax, scold, or cajole him as I would. Therefore, when I found myself enjoying the tumbling waves at their marge, Master Waif always remained at the top of the cliff, or up among the fishing-boats and disused bathing-machines. He would not, however, lose sight of me, or allow his attention to be diverted from my movements, following my progress in a parallel line, but always well inland. I believe the poor brute had a very bad time of it at such moments. He never appeared to forget the horror of that terrible night on which I picked him up; it was as fresh in his memory as ever, and his great affection for me even could not overcome it. I sympathised with him, but did not allow his terror to interfere with my enjoyment at the seaside; but as I always knew I was sure of finding him waiting anxiously at the top of the path whenever I returned to the upper cliff, I spent most of my time upon the sands, or upon a low sea-walk which ran beside them. I should here state that he was a poodle, as the sailor in my friend's account had hinted; and, like dogs of his class, had at one time, no doubt, been shaved all round his hind-quarters and legs. Evidently, however, he had been neglected on board ship, and when I rescued him, he had not been subjected to the ridiculous and barbarous process for several months. I, too, continued to allow his coat to grow, only clipping it at

times here and there, for the sake of his comfort and cleanliness. The result was not very flattering to his personal appearance. In fact, he was an ugly dog, and I had no fear of his being stolen or otherwise losing him. I disregarded, however, his external shortcomings in consideration of his quickness and intelligence, which were quite extraordinary.

Amongst the few visitors at Calaiscourt, I had noticed a very charming young lady, walking constantly with an old gentleman, upon my favourite beat. They lived in a small house right down upon the shore, and I never chanced to meet them fifty yards from the sea, so fond did they both appear of remaining close to it. They were constantly, too, going out for sails and excursions, but they were always alone. They appeared to know no one, or to make any acquaintances. I got the idea, I can hardly tell why, that there was something like a cloud resting on these two. In spite of a bright and happy temperament, there was occasionally an air of pathos in the young girl's face, as I have watched her standing, gazing far out to sea, unconscious, apparently, of everything around her. The old gentleman likewise had the same sad absent look in his face, but in a much more marked degree, and I felt sure there was something melancholy in the background of their history.

A lonely bachelor, condemned to compulsory idleness in a dull watering-place, might have found a far less attractive person than this young lady invested with interest, even without the halo of romance which my

imagination had thrown around her. I do not hesitate to say I made inquiries about her, but, beyond learning her name, and that she and her father came from London, found out nothing. I would have given worlds for an introduction, and romantically longed for something to happen as a pretext for making their acquaintance. I little suspected how near my wishes were to realisation. I was seated one evening upon the shore, watching the two as they strolled backwards and forwards on the lower walk, when, contrary to their usual habit, they took the path leading to the top of the upper cliff, on the edge of which, as usual, old Waif was lying in wait for me.

I could not suppose that they had even noticed my existence: I was therefore free, I thought, to walk in the same direction, without being suspected of following them. My interest was on the rapid increase, and I began to find myself never quite so happy when she was out of my sight.

So I rose from my seat, and began, at a respectful distance, also to ascend the cliff, an additional zest being given to my reconnaissance by the unusual direction father and daughter were taking. When I had reached a half-way turn in the path, and they were at the top, just passing out of my view, I heard the young lady suddenly utter a suppressed scream of fear, and the gentleman cry out angrily, 'Go away! get down, sir! get down, you brute!' Then followed a yelp and bark from Waif, as though he had been struck. I hurried forward, but before I could come within sight of the group the

same sounds were repeated with greater vehemence. What was happening? I could not imagine. I was quite sure my poor dog was far too good-tempered gratuitously to attack strangers who did not meddle unkindly with him, and I could hardly suppose that my two unknown friends would voluntarily do anything cruel to the animal. Yet here were indications, increasing in loudness every moment, that a furious assault was going on, and that the old gentleman was beating off Waif with his stick.

As I came within sight of the scene, this proved to be actually the case. The dog was persistently jumping up towards the girl, not angrily, but with intense affection, as I could instantly discern. She was trying to escape from him, whilst her father continued to aim desperate blows at the poor brute, who, every now and then, came in for one of them, which made him howl again as he twirled and scampered about, but which in no way diverted him from insisting on an affectionate recognition from the young lady.

Dashing in between them, I immediately secured my dog by his collar, and began to apologise for his behaviour, at the same time resenting the attack the gentleman was making upon him by the assurance that he was not savage, and that he would harm nobody.

'He evidently thinks he knows you,' I said, addressing the young lady; 'he only wants to show his joy; I am really very sorry that he should have frightened—'

'Frightened, sir? he has nearly thrown the lady into hysterics; you ought to keep your dog in better order. Showing his joy, indeed! how can you

suppose that such a brute should know anything of my daughter? We've never set eyes on him before.'

'No,' I replied, 'it is probably a mistake. Come away, Waif! come away, sir! come away directly;' but although I had released him, and he no longer continued his active demonstrations of delight, he was quite unwilling to follow me, and stood still, wistfully looking at the girl, wagging his tail, and uttering now and then a little conciliatory bark. She had moved a pace or two away, and sat down upon a bench, looking deadly pale, but evidently recovering by degrees her presence of mind. There were no people about on the top of the cliff, and we had the stage all to ourselves for the enactment of the strange scene that was to follow. I further apologised, and further attempted to get the dog away, but neither threats nor entreaties affected him. He would come a few steps towards me, and then return anxiously to his new-found friend, as if wishing to introduce us. Again and again he did this, and I again intimated that, curious as it might seem, I was quite sure that the dog knew her.

'How can it be, sir?' insisted the father; 'how do you suppose it can be? How long have you had your dog?'

'O, it is very strange, I admit,' I said; 'I have had him these four years; but he is so intelligent and sagacious that I can hardly doubt there is some meaning in his behaviour. I came by him in a very curious manner; I found him at sea;' and I was about, in as few words as possible, to tell his story, when a move-

ment from the young lady stopped me. She rose from the bench, and now, with a total absence of fear, stooped down to the dog, took hold of him, and looked straight into his face, and then exclaiming, with a wild sort of cry, quite out of character with the situation, 'Why, papa! it's Booby, it's Booby!' fell forward senseless upon the ground. Her father, with my aid, immediately lifted her back to her seat, supporting her in his arms; the dog barking and rushing to and fro, in a mad state of excitement. She was in a death-like faint, and defied all our small attempts at restoration. Finding this, I volunteered to go for assistance; and, with a few hasty words, set off towards the nearest doctor's, Waif following me for some little distance, and then scampering back to the cliff, and then back again after me. I was so puzzled and excited by the rapidity with which these events had happened that I had no time to think, and I suppose I was gone much longer than I fancied on my errand, for, as I returned to the spot with the doctor, twilight was fast fading out of the sky, and, to my further astonishment, there was no one on the bench.

The doctor, concluding that he would not now be wanted, left me with a brief 'Good-night,' and I, full of curiosity to clear up the mystery of poor Waif's antecedents, upon the track of which I had at last evidently come, mechanically turned down the cliff and directed my steps towards the little cottage where I knew my, or rather my dog's, friends resided.

It was approached by a winding garden-path, giving upon a low sea-wall. The moon was already rising, and

shed light sufficient to reveal, when within a short distance of the house, the old gentleman coming hastily towards me. Very formally he raised his hat, and said, 'Sir, I was about to seek you, and to explain that my daughter having recovered somewhat, we thought it best to return home immediately. She was much agitated, we are both much agitated, and I will ask you, if you please, to tell me at once how you became possessed of your dog. You were indeed correct in saying that he knew my daughter, though I could hardly imagine it at the time. But, as you saw at length, *she* recognised him, and we thus appear to have found a clue for which I have been looking for years, a clue to a sad mystery—a great family grief—which you must pardon my not entering upon just now.'

I noticed, as we stood together in the moonlight, that the careworn anxious look he always bore was much intensified. As I proceeded to recount to him Waif's story, he sat down upon the edge of the wall, looking earnestly into my face, and hanging upon every breath. He displayed great emotion throughout, but when I came to the incident of the unhappy man on the wreck, sinking never to rise again, and concluded by stating that no other trace of the vessel had ever been discovered, he was entirely overcome, and, for several minutes, hid his face with his hands, moaning bitterly. With a strong effort he somewhat recovered himself after a while, but his voice trembled and broke, as he proceeded to say,

'The dog, sir, belonged to my son, and from what

you tell me, I have every reason to believe it was my son whom you saw perish so miserably. His dog would have stayed by him to the last. We have heard nothing of him for nearly six years; he disappeared, in fact, no one knew whither.' And now, quite unable to stay his tears, the poor old man added, 'O, it is fit, it is fit that I should hear of this, it is fit that I should be thus punished! Forgive me, sir, if I leave you now. I thank you, I thank you very much! but to-morrow I shall be better able to talk to you. Yonder is where I live; come to me, pray!' and in a few minutes he had returned to the house and entered it.

Needless almost is it to say that I did not fail to present myself next morning—alone, of course—for, as last night, even after what had passed upon the cliff, Waif would not come down upon the lower walk, although he appeared quite to understand where I was going. He was greatly distraught, and spent as restless a night as I did. A close acquaintance naturally was very soon the result of this *rencontre* of mine with the two visitors at Calaiscourt, who had so excited my interest. It is not wonderful that by degrees I became the sharer of many family confidences. Those which concern this narrative may be briefly stated; and as it has been unnecessary to mention any names, I have no compunction about giving their outline.

My poor old friend had treated his only son (a scapegrace, no doubt, at heart) with undue severity from the boy's earliest days. The feud between father and son widened as the latter grew to manhood. He re-

sented the tyranny, and the sister alone retarded a catastrophe, for the mother had died when both children were infants. At last, continual scenes of violence and recrimination were brought to a climax by the son leaving the house with the paternal curse upon his head. He went abroad for a time, and then returned to live a life of disreputable dissipation in London. He communicated clandestinely with his sister, inducing her to bring him money to his lodgings. There she saw the poodle dog he had brought from France, and whom he declared to be the staunchest and best friend, save herself (towards whom the dog evinced also the warmest attachment), that he had in the world; nothing, he insisted, would separate them but death, and, in contradistinction to the animal's great intelligence, he called him 'Booby.'

On one occasion, after a short absence with her father in the country, she sought her brother at his usual haunt. He and his dog had disappeared, and from that time forth they never heard of him again. A serious illness, of which the father nearly died, brought with it repentance for his harshness. He asked for his boy, whose name up to that time, from the hour he had driven him from his home, he had forbidden any one to mention, and then the daughter told him all she knew. He never ceased accusing himself of having been the cause of many of the lad's errors. Desperate remorse seized him, intense longing for his son's return possessed him; rewards were offered, and every means taken to discover the prodigal, but all

being in vain, the heart-broken parent sank into the dejected miserable man I found him ; and considering the never-swerving affection of the sister for the brother, it was not wonderful to find that the cloud which rested on the old man's life cast a portion of its shadow upon the girl.

With the aid of time, I think I have been able to dispel the gloom. I have striven hard to do so ; I have striven to fill up the son's place in the father's heart, and I am much more than a brother to the sister. Poor old Waif (we never call him Booby) is still alive, and his intelligence, at least, is as vigorous as ever. He appears quite conscious of the happiness he has brought about. 'It is all due to my memory, you see,' he seems to say ; 'I thought I recollected her when I saw her walking by the sea, though I did not dare to go down and make sure ; I often hoped she might come along my way, but she was so fond of that terrible sea ; and when at last I had the chance of showing myself to her, she did not know me because, forsooth, I had changed my coat, or rather because I had got my top one on ; why, I should have known her in any dress !'

If thus he muses, he muses rightly. His instinct, reason, call it what you will, has been of more value to me than all the counsel evolved from the wisest pates. It is true he cannot tell us how or why his first poor master came to be upon the German Ocean on that fearful night, but the uncertainty of the end, which was so hard to bear, the dog has quite cleared up.

It is not a little remarkable that I have lived to

attain the reward hinted at by my friend, in his portion of this story, as awaiting me for my conduct on board the Van Dunck. In whatever way he intended my very natural act to be repaid in the fiction he had begun to weave, I know not ; but his words were prophetic, for, in the wife I won through Waif's introduction, I have realised a reward that is priceless ; for, without her by my side, the anniversary of Christmas-day—the day on which it is quite true that I picked up the dog—could never to me have become the joyous festival I now find it.

SPEAKING WALLS.

‘If these walls could speak, what tales they might tell!’ is the common expression of the visitor to any ancient edifice or habitation renowned for its historic or domestic interest. As he gazes round and begins to think of all he has read or heard of the place, there will arise before him, if he be not entirely destitute of imagination, pictures of people and events possessing an interest the most profound and actual.

Thus, according to his powers of realisation, the walls *do* speak in accents clear and unmistakable, or in whisperings obscure and undefined. More or less, he must hear something of what they could tell, and the ‘dead past,’ to a certain extent, is restored to the ‘living present.’

Walls such as these may be likened to the patriarchs of old speaking to a rising generation, when, long before the printing-press and the library could hand down in cold, passionless, machine-like regularity the lessons which history can teach, the elder of a community was, as has been aptly put by a noble-minded divine, ‘his neighbour’s chronicler, bearing within him the only extant image of many departed scenes and memorable deeds, and able to link the dim traditions

of the past with the living incidents of the present. . . . He was their poet, representative of an age already passed from the actual into the ideal, associate or contemporary of men whose names have become venerable, and in the oft-repeated tale of other days, from which time has expelled whatever was prosaic, weaving the retrospect of life into an epic. He was their priest, loving to nurture wonder and spread the sense of mystery by recounting the authentic prodigies of his own or his father's years, when omen and prophecy were no dubious things, but sober verities which Providence had not yet begrudged the still pious earth.'

And do not the ivy-mantled moat-house, the lichen-toned many-gabled Tudor mansion, the baronial hall, the castle keep, or battlemented hoary-headed tower, or, going farther back, the Roman, Grecian, or Egyptian temple, assume the part of patriarch? and in their gray and sober garb appear with solemn voice to be telling us tales as mysterious and entrancing as if we took them from the lips of a living sage? Given but a little imagination or the faintest touch of fancy, and we hear in the crumbling walls the whisperings of the chronicler, the poet, and the priest: whisperings only, because we hear them through the muffling veil of time, but plain in their purport, and audible as the wind whistling through their rent and loopholed sides, to all who are not stone or brick-and-mortar deaf. Phantoms in the brick, and skeletons in the stone, come forth rehabilitated and substantiated, appearing and vanishing again perhaps, like the shapes in a

dream; unchronologically, disconnectedly, and with the effect of a phantasmagoria, the offspring of association alone, but not on that account the less to be regarded.

These facts are trite with respect to the world-famed piles which have formed the background of history. Everybody feels or affects to feel their force, but everybody does not stop to remember that the principle holds equally good with the smaller and more insignificant set scenes of daily life. Yet the houses in our very midst have walls whence voices come to some of us full of eloquence, toned truly in a minor key, because they testify to things passed and gone in which we personally had a share; voices from the walls which have encompassed the theatre wherein our own brief little history has been and is being enacted.

Sadly, for the most part, ring out such sounds; for although we may listen with deep interest to the words uttered by the 'lime and rough-cast' about the world's doings ere we were born, the moment we step on the stage *in propria personâ*, or are discovered there in cradle or perambulator, the chorus and orchestral accompaniments are immediately changed in key; the curtain once up, and our part fairly begun, it is seldom that the retrospect, as sounded by the walls, can have in it as much of mirthful music as of solemn. Very seldom will the accompaniment which welcomes us as we revisit the house, perhaps the very room in which we were born, be in the shape of a triumphal march; far more often it will be dirge-like

in character. Even though the first recollections of the glare and glitter of the footlights date, as our nursery walls remind us, from this spot, and we here first became conscious of the splendid joys of toys and picture-books, and the gorgeous scenery which baby eyes can conjure up from out the poorest properties, and it may be that for a moment we experience some return of our infantine sensations, they are immediately overwhelmed by the sadder hues which succeeded. The faces of the loving fairies who met us on the frontier of 'the land of dreams and shadows, that tremendous region' (as Dickens calls it) 'whence we had so lately travelled,'—the fairies who smoothed our pillows, and brought us all the good gifts contained in their storehouses of parental love and tenderness, have long since vanished and passed away, or at the best have faded into such sedate and sober-clad prosaic people, as to be hardly recognisable.

Thus the chorus from the walls cannot be other than a solemn one for most of us, as we listen to what it has to say about our earliest days.

The next stage of the strange eventful history lands us perhaps at the old school-house, and there of a certainty we find most eloquent sermons in the stones; nay, our very names, graven on their surface by our own hands, and surrounded by those of our playmates and schoolfellows, testify to the interest with which we must regard all that these walls can have to say. To no one else can they ever speak so plainly and directly; but still again their voice is solemn, and the

substance of their discourse hardly exhilarating. They may recall to our memory for a moment the happiness we felt in turning our backs upon them ; we may taste again a suspicion of the joyous freedom we felt as we bounded out of that old portal with bat and wickets, or in flannel suits ready for the boat ; but in the same breath they will remind us of the desperate grind by which we earned our holidays, and of all the black Mondays with which these were brought to an end. Moreover, the tell-tale date appended to our name is too significant an item or part of speech to be passed lightly by, and brings to a close, in a manner not to be misunderstood, the eloquence of these bricks and mortar.

A trifle less dolorous is the tale, let us hope, we listen to when we revisit our first set of chambers, or the lodgings in which we were installed, when we made our first independent plunge into life.

Let us hope that this start was a fair one, and that the account of the course which followed it, as given out by the familiar old walls when we are again face to face with them, will not have to be strongly emphasised when it comes to that part which must inevitably record the follies and the blunders inseparable from youth, and that the lath and plaster, the faded red-flock paper, and the old oak panelling, whilst reëchoing the merriment of many a jovial party assembled within their snug boundary, will not convey to our ears the remotest strain of discord. If we have passed through the fire without much severe singeing, and we have to

regret naught but that the jolly time can never come again, with all its accompanying strength of will, energy, perseverance, and enthusiasm, the song sung or the speech made by the walls of our bachelor rooms may be almost the pleasantest of these orations.

Almost, but not quite; for surely the pleasantest speech that bricks and mortar can make to us will come from that abode where first we encountered our *fate*, or where *she* was living when we first knew her. Very eloquent, too, will be the ghosts which come out from the stuccoed elegance of the semi-detached villa which we took her home to; and Heaven send that the little faces which their word-painting will bring before our eyes may, during the course of years, have only so changed as to increase our pride in them! They are men and women now, perhaps, on their 'own hook,' to use the slang diction which, since they were born, has wriggled its way into our common speech, and the good taste of which is about on a par with that displayed by the architecture which sheltered the juvenile days of our progeny. Look at and listen to the villa residence which was once the abode of love and domestic felicity! Five-and-twenty years have not passed since it was built; we were its first tenants; and yet its voice now is more decrepit and wheezy by far than that of the old, honestly-built, substantial Alma Mater of ours, though that probably numbers ten five-and-twenties since its foundations were laid. The wretched sham veneer, the stuccoed sides of the bijou villa, have long ago begun to peel and crumble off, and have foregone


any farther attempt to look like stone. The damaged edges and corners of the facings, the green and mouldy slimy-looking gate-posts and portico, with slabs of mock granite sliding and shifting from the brick-dust and rubble, the rottenness of which they can no longer hide, tell, even to the indifferent observer, of something wrong in that state of things which can allow walls like these to rise and pass themselves off as honest shelters against wind and weather.

To us, who have dwelt within them, they speak of so much that was bright and happy in the main, that we condone their falsity; and though it will not much signify to our sons and daughters, who have less of the sentimental about them than ourselves, by the time *they* have ears to listen to speaking walls there will be none to speak, at least none that can tell *them* nursery tales. The surrounding patch of garden-ground in the delightful suburb is becoming daily more and more valuable, and when the short leases of the elegant detached villas fall in, the structures, or what remains of them, will be swept bodily away, to make room for continuous rows, streets, and terraces. The prematurely decayed remains will be incorporated possibly with the new erections, notwithstanding that a hope begins to dawn in our minds, as we listen to the *very, very* newest walls rising around us, of a wholesomer honester quality in their work than was found five-and-twenty years ago.

A better taste likewise is evidenced in their design and colour, telling of the wider views in art which are

gradually permeating society. Many modern walls say to us, as plainly as walls can say it, 'Look at us, look here! You see we *can* be built with an eye to some variety of surface and shape; we need not be stuck up flat and monotonous, with four, six, or more square holes cut in us and called windows; these can be arched, made circular and multiform, with edgings and dressings, columns and pilasters, shapely and picturesque; and because we chance to be erected in a climate that has nine months of winter to three of summer, and is gray and sombre in its general tone, colour need not be absolutely banished from our face. Brick, stone, tile, and marble of various hues surely will help to dispel the universal gray, or at least help to make that muddy mixture of fog and soot useful from its very ugliness as a background for our beauty.'

Why, there are walls in the City now really so grand and palatial that, if their speech were but hallowed by time, would outvie much that we travel miles to see and listen to, and seeing, sigh sentimentally, and say, 'Ah, those were the days when the merchant princes of Genoa and the Levant had taste and culture, and spent the profits of their trading, not only with a lavish hand, but with the purpose of elevating and ennobling those by whom they were surrounded.' We cry out against the demolition of many an ugly structure of a past time, simply because we are averse to change, and without stopping to think that what its old walls can say to us could have been much better said if they had been beautiful instead of hideous, grudge to posterity the



comparatively melodious accents in which a better order of architecture will speak to it.

However, the tendencies of the people in the end will make themselves felt, even through the medium of bricks and mortar, and we need not derogate from our position amongst nations as the leaders of commerce, because stone and marble give out signs that there is something like a true feeling for art springing up. It is our privilege to grumble; but so long as the speech of our walls continues to improve, and to become more cultured and pure, the latter part of the Victorian era will claim attention from those who, in future ages, will consult our walls for indications of the tone and habits of our minds. They will not misjudge us if they take our new buildings as an index of our progress; and when the direful slums, which we still consider as affording adequate accommodation for our very poorest, are swept away by Act of Parliament, in spite of all detractors, London will become murally one of the handsomest, instead of, as hitherto, one of the ugliest, cities in the world.

Interiorly, likewise, walls are beginning to have their say, and have cried out to some purpose for artistic treatment. Happily, they no longer endure placidly the outrages committed upon them by gaudy huge-patterned papers. Exquisite conventional forms replace the so-called natural presentments of cabbage-roses, and gigantic honeysuckles, twining round impossibly perspectived trellis-work, are supplanted by a tender trefoil; whilst outrageously brilliant birds and butterflies

give place to quaint and picturesque devices of the purest art. Panelled papers, depicting vases of flowers or tawdry vignetted landscapes of the Italian temple pattern, bordered with garlands, suspended by very rosy-lipped cherubim, or ill-drawn gods and goddesses, but scantily attired in the flimsiest garments, have ceased to predominate in the modern drawing-room. Frescoes, or at any rate pictures, painted *in situ* to do duty for mural decoration, and to harmonise fitly with the other appointments of an apartment, are not now considered beneath the attention of our leading painters, and some of the R.A.'s and A.R.A.'s have been profitably employed by not merely painting pictures to exhibit, but by painting hundreds of works for the palaces of our millionaires, designed and executed solely as appropriate fittings and wall-coverings for rooms, and which would have but little interest pictorially away from the place for which they were originally destined.

Comparing thus what the newest walls are saying to us, from the inside and the out, with what we hear from many an old home of our own when it is revisited, we cannot fail to notice in the former a healthier and more educated speech; association alone can invest the latter with superior interest.

Somewhat in contrast to the educated tone thus beginning to pervade the language of new walls, is the din of the noisy voices which come from the hoardings of our towns. The advertising mania having selected every available space which can call itself a wall, from the insides of omnibuses and railway carriages to the

scaffoldings surrounding every demolition or urban alteration, a hubbub very jarring to delicate nerves is created. The blatant placards declaring the superiority of a new hair-dye, or announcing the enormous circulation of the largest newspapers in the world, must modify to some extent the feelings of congratulation in which we are inclined to indulge when attending to the signs elsewhere displayed of the advance in good taste, for here and there only do we come across any conspicuous design for these strident self-asserting shouts which is entirely devoid of vulgarity. Once or twice there may have been heard the gentler influences of art, even in the coarser productions of the advertising vocabulary, pictorial or literary; but, as a rule, the speech of those timber structures called 'street hoardings' is unpleasantly loud and discordant.

There is yet another, although rather a distinct, class of wall, which—to Britons at least with ears and hearts—has a good deal to say. The 'wooden walls of Old England' cannot be excluded from the list of speakers; and though fast disappearing in the literal sense, they have voices which will make themselves heard as long as our language lasts. So long as we remain a sea-going people, the deeds and names of our great naval captains, and the brave hands under them, will find their best chroniclers and poets in the wooden walls.

Necessarily more destructible than the solid homes of men upon the land, the memory of them is at least as imperishable, and perhaps what they can say has a

more stirring effect upon the dullest and least educated amongst our countrymen than any other 'speaking walls.' We each and all seem to have a personal interest in every word they utter, and landsman and old 'salt' alike—he who has never set his foot on a ship's deck, and he who has spent his life there—equally pricks up his ears in the presence of a Dreadnought or a Victory; and the interest we take, whether personal or archæological, in 'wooden walls,' testifies pretty plainly that there is no more interesting history in the world to Englishmen than that which is proclaimed by them. Friendly and tender as is their speech in this respect, they can, however, when occasion requires, talk in a very different language. Give them but the cue, and they will declaim with tongues of fire so volubly, and with such an overwhelming roar and torrent of argument, that it seldom fails to gain the cause which they are advocating. Nor does it signify that, under the touch of the modern magician's wand, they are gradually being transformed from wood to iron; they will not be the less our bulwarks, or, because they lack some of the old romantic beauty clinging to their elder sisters, be less able to resist the assaults of enemies.

Virtually they are still our wooden walls, for their substrata are teak and heart of oak; nor, because necessity obliges them to coat themselves in mail, need they lose one jot of the talismanic charm which hallows their ancient name.

Upon our age of course depends much of the signi-



ficance and pith to be found in mural utterances. The length of their tale, too, must equally depend upon our length of years; for as it is said, those who live the longest see the most, so should it be that those who live longest also hear the most. Hence year by year, as we journey on, volumes are added by the stony records to our library of retrospect, but it is to be feared the style of declamation does not increase in lightness or brightness as the end draws nearer, and by the time the word 'finis' comes to be spoken, the voice that utters it will be solemn indeed.


Not the less, however, will it be the voice of a wall that speaks the epilogue to our performance, and though it will never reach our ears, those who do hear it, and are left to carry on the play, will, let us hope, not be deaf to its echoes. For, after all, what walls can speak to so much purpose as those of the houses which, as Shakespeare says, 'last till doomsday'? There is no question of the workmanship here; mason, shipwright, or carpenter are all distanced, and so long as the world remains, it is amidst the homes of the dead that we must seek for the one eternal unvarying lesson preached by 'speaking walls.'

WHERE SHALL WE GO?

‘August’s a merrier month than May,
When all the world is off,’ &c.

So, at least, sang poor Albert Smith; and surely there must be hundreds and hundreds of our town-imprisoned citizens who, being worn and exhausted by their nine months’ hard labour at the tread-mill of trade, or at the penal servitude of professional life, are just now quite ready to indorse the assertion, and to read ‘September’ in addition to ‘August.’ No one more thoroughly depicted the ‘exodus’ and feelings of the great multitude of tourising Londoners than our much-lamented amuser and amusing author. Their emotions and sentiments under most circumstances were pretty familiar to him, but at the particular period when the world is thinking of going out of town, he used perhaps to be especially in his element, and to give us his liveliest sketches of character.

In fact, as most of us remember, the pith of all his entertainments consisted in the way he described so accurately and graphically the doings of the English *en voyage*. The ascent of Mont Blanc eventually became little more than the mere pretext for our old friend to discourse during a couple of hours, for something like



two thousand nights, on the vicissitudes, whimsicalities, follies, troubles, and trials of the old lady with the black box, and the young lady with the Tennysonian quotations; the young man who learned to play a *ranz des vaches* on the flute, and who was always submitting the simplicity of his performance for Mr. Smith's approbation; of the uncertain old gentleman who never knew whether he was going to Ramsgate or Constantinople; and of the inimitable Engineer Edwards, with his rambling incoherent story and incomprehensible catalogue of grievances. These, together with imitations of railway calls and signals, the *dix minutes d'arrêt*, the drawing champagne-corks at Epernay, the old Belgian *bon-voyage* notes on the horn at Malines or Ghent, and the ever-fresh comic song of *Galignani's Messenger*, made up the staple of the entertainment.

His expedition to China shared very much the same fate; and he was never so much at home and so happy as when reintroducing such acquaintances as we had made with him on the Continent under the slightly-altered condition of 'travellers in the tropics.' Like all successful men, poor Albert Smith had many enemies, and was roundly abused, but he knew the Cockney weaknesses, including his own, as well as most men, perhaps better. Over that incongruous collection of feeble platitudes, imbecile twaddle, and impertinent remarks to be found in the visitors' books at continental hotels, he was deservedly caustic and severe; but whilst never failing to make a joke where he saw a

chance, he was equally ready to applaud one if it was good; and no one more thoroughly enjoyed than he himself the waggyery which suggested that he wrote only two-thirds of the truth when he put his initials A. S. to some observations of his own in the *livre des voyageurs*. Thus intense good humour was always mingled so pleasantly with his satire, that all the little personalities in which he now and then indulged only provoked laughter and tittering even from his great enemies and butts the 'prancers' themselves.

So, whether in the valleys and amongst the ice-peaks of Switzerland, on a Rhine steamer or on board a Peninsular and Oriental boat, or in the stifling little omnibus plying across the Desert, at the *table d'hôte*, at the halt at the hospice, in the cathedral city, or on the Venetian lagunes, the Englishman, on his autumnal outing, was always good-humouredly shown, as a being in a high state of enjoyment, albeit not unfrequently taking his pleasure sadly and even foolishly.

But although August, from the fact of its being the holiday-time of most of our working classes, is a merrier month than May, its scorching sun is not necessary to develop the Briton's travelling instincts; these, together with his inborn love of open-air occupations and amusements, are always pretty fresh, and whilst our race remains what it is, we may hope ever likely to continue so.

From the earliest days of spring, when railway companies begin to put forward with the green leaves their advertisements for excursion-trains, the Londoner's

heart begins to palpitate with anxiety to gaze upon 'fresh woods and pastures new.' High and low alike are affected indirectly with a latent desire to get out of town; it begins in May, and gradually increases in intensity, until it culminates in a morose and savage madness in August and September. The poor little ragged urchins, with primitive piscatorial intentions, who swarm round our suburban ponds, bent on the capture by thread and crooked-pin hook of the lively minnow and truculent tadpole, are only evincing in their way, and, as it were, from the starting-point, the Englishman's love of sport in the open air. We see it amongst the romping school-children playing in the parks, and in the wild horse-play of the hobbledohoy birds'-nesting roughs trooping through our out-lying green lanes on Sunday mornings. Rising in the social scale, we find everywhere an undiminished inclination to get out of town, to escape from bricks and mortar directly the days lengthen and the temperature becomes genial. We find it on any high-road within a dozen miles of the big city, or in any of the thoroughfares leading to its outlets.

Now it will be in the form of the Whitechapel sporting publican's smart gig, with its high-stepping, fast-trotting mare; now the small tradesman's tax-cart, crammed to overflowing, with his fat wife and half a dozen children, painfully suggestive of the elevation of the pony high into the air by the belly-band; and then perhaps by the covered van crowded with holiday-makers, roistering and noisy, and who, despite the

inevitable stone beer-bottle, never fail to bring home green and flowering trophies of their ruralising.

Another round or two up the ladder of society will show us the same never-failing tendency of the human species to turn its face towards verdant lawns, sparkling streams, shady woods, or breezy heights. With warm weather we have paterfamilias thipking of a cottage on the Thames for a couple of months, handy to the railway, so that he may go backwards and forwards to his business every day, until he can take his autumn holiday. Bachelor propensities, too, tend equally in this direction. All sorts and manner of single men—bar-risters, solicitors, merchants, Civil Service clerks, and the host of them—have their lodgings a little way out of the smoke, or at least a bedroom to go down to, when inclined for a pull on the river, or some rifle-practice at the targets, during the long summer evenings.

Fresh air, and a greenery of some kind, is held to be essential after the dust and turmoil of the day's work. The necessity has of course grown with the growth of the town; for in those days when our traders were wont to reside over their shops and warehouses, when the City was really the dwelling-place, and not the mere office, of its denizens, it was not blocked up by suburbs almost as closely packed with dwellings as the streets themselves, and a moderate walk would bring the citizen within easy reach of meadows and tinkling sheep-bells.

The merchant princes nowadays show their tenden-



cies rural wise, by the sumptuous mansions which bedeck all such localities as Wimbledon, Hampstead, Clapham, Wandsworth, and the rest. Scarcely a single neighbourhood within a few miles' drive of London but bears these marks of the strong love of country manifested by every one who can afford it. Even those fortunate ones of the earth, those blue-blooded *Hidalgoes*, who come to town for 'the season,' leaving their broad domains just at the time when Nature begins to don her summer robes, are by no means insensible to her charms, although appearances are somewhat against them in this respect. At any rate they perpetually show a laudable anxiety to combine with the whirl and excitement of fashionable doings such snatches of fresh air, and peeps of green trees, as are offered by our parks, and by dinners at Richmond, Hampton Court, and other out-lying picturesque suburbs.

The garden-parties, water-parties, the archery gatherings, the cricket-matches, the pigeon-shooting, the botanical *fêtes*, the flower-shows, the race-meetings, and the picnics, are but so many evidences of the lingering desire which the utmost civilisation fails entirely to eradicate from man; that desire for the refreshing influence of sweet sounds, sights, and smells, which can never be afforded by bustling thoroughfares under a summer sun.

When at last, however, the Long Vacation draws near, when all classes are more or less jaded and weary with the work and amusement of 'the season,' the great question of 'Where shall we go for our holiday?'

forces itself into all our minds, and will not be stilled until a satisfactory answer has been found. But this is not easy; for after we have racked what we are pleased to call our brain, set Reason tottering on her throne, driven ourselves half crazy by a hopeless effort to settle the point, consulted every conceivable authority—our travelled friends, guide-books, Bradshaws, maps—and got nothing out of them, at any rate nothing on which we choose to act, we find ourselves much more in the condition of Albert Smith's uncertain old gentleman, than we are inclined to admit. A recapitulation of every suggestion in the world leads us nowhere; we fall into a state of utter bewilderment, which our frantic desire to get away only increases; so finally we determine that it does not signify *where* we go, so long as we go somewhere.

No; what does it signify? We cannot do everything, and go everywhere, unless perchance we happen to have already been and gone and done everything, everywhere; and then, it signifies less. Do we want novelty? Bah, the thing is absurd! What well-constituted mind ever expects it, or looks for it, nowadays? How long is it since we have experienced a new sensation? And then our mind begins feebly to speculate on *this* question, and helplessly to leave the more important one for a time.

Do we find much novelty in our popular literature? Have our novelists,—novelists, save the mark!—given us much of it lately? or have they not rather met with their greatest successes whilst dealing with nineteenth-

century life, where all the characters are depicted as moving in scenes with which most of us are acquainted ? Certainly this has been the case with many of our painters ; and the departure of a mail-train, the excitement of a racecourse, or holiday-makers disporting themselves on the sands, are subjects which, making no very large demand on our understanding, have well-nigh done as much to establish the reputation of their limner as the loftiest historical themes, a full appreciation of which would have committed some of us to an amount of reading and thought not in accordance with our general habits.

The stage, in like manner, relies on modern realistic appurtenances for its greatest attractions ; and where formerly an audience found itself plunged into the realms of imagination, awe-struck by the supernatural, and bewitched by fantastic freaks of fancy, fondly admiring, and content to realise through the aid of grand poetry every necessary detail, it now requires real rushing water, actual bridges, veritable hansoms, absolute fire-engines, and barking dogs ; whilst the horse (formerly the only element of the positive), though still holding his place, instead of carrying armour-clad knights or bespangled dames, has now but to prolong into the night the same prosaic rôle he has been performing all day in our thoroughfares and squares.

The days when Wheland held sway, as the great representative of the monkey-tribe in the theatre, are gone, and nothing will content us now but the real performing Jacko, on his little round table, as we may

see him in Sackville-street or Piccadilly any day of our lives. Thus, it would seem that extremes have met, and the greatest novelty is to be found in materials which have no novelty at all about them, and which do not give us any mental labour to analyse.

Why, therefore, if this is the case with everything else, need we give such importance to the consideration of where we shall go for our holiday? So, returning to our original question in a more contented frame of mind, we do not stop to consider whether this is a healthy state of things or not, but being people disposed to take matters pleasantly, we merely use it as a justification for our ultimate indifference on the subject, and for repeating that it does not signify where we go. Besides, nowadays, when nearly every place and every thing has been done, an ever-recurring demand for something new—a demand which makes the meat it feeds upon—would be not only a very wearing, but a nearly hopeless one, and ought not to be encouraged; for, indeed, with the exception, shall we say, of the Albert Nyanza and its neighbourhood, the interior of Greenland, or in a balloon two miles high in mid-air, where should we look for it? Just possibly we might come across some 'uncommon objects' by the sea-shore of the Fee-jee Islands, or obtain a new sensation from the fast life of Nagasaki or Yokohama; but save in some such remote locality, we should search in vain for any very startling novelty.

Hence, therefore, if we cannot make up our mind, let us call a cab, let the driver of our hansom settle the

question, by driving to whichever terminus he pleases ; or stay, are we quite sure that there is any real necessity for our going away at all ? Has not habit, rather than anything else, forced the idea upon us ? Could we not get as much enjoyment out of staying in town, when everybody else has left it, as by rushing and tearing all over the world for what is called the sake of a change ? In these times of rapid communication, when with the interval of a pleasant nap, or a quiet read, we may reach one city after another, just as if we were only moving about one large metropolis, it becomes doubtful whether anything is gained by going anywhere. Is not the spirit of Haussmannisation moreover, by making every place look alike, rather confirmatory of this doubt ? and is it not a question whether in the future the only really 'homely wits' will be those people who have endeavoured 'to see the wonders of the world abroad' ?

Ah, well, no ; we must go away somewhere too. The future must take care of itself ; for the present, London has grown intolerable, the oven-like streets reeking with that peculiarly obnoxious odour induced by the heat of a glaring sun, long days, and water-carts ; that combined odour of stale fruit and vegetables, rotten eggs, foul tobacco, spilt beer, rank cart-grease, dried soot, smoke, triturated road-dust, and damp straw, has become positively pestilential. Our very rooms, both at home and at the club, get a queer atmosphere about them. Carpets, curtains, and rugs, which at other times are quite innoxious, now exhale a dusty, musty,

fusty smell highly offensive to our olfactory nerves. Our costume likewise can no longer be submitted to; the chimney-pot hat, with its hard uncompromising pressure on our brow, must be supplanted by the soft wideawake or airy straw. The faultless trousers and frock-coat must be exchanged for the pliant home-spun shooting-jacket and knickerbockers; whilst gloves, having become instruments of positive torture, finger- and thumb-screws in fact, must be entirely abandoned.

So, then, we will not attempt to see wonders. Fresh air and rest shall be our only plea for leaving home, and to get these we will not travel as hard as rail or steamboat will carry us, for twenty-four hours at a stretch, and then, after an interval of six or eight, dash off again at lightning speed for two more days and a night, in order that at the end of a week we may find ourselves a thousand miles away from London, with a dizzy confusion in our head as to whether we started a month ago or yesterday morning. No, we will not try and see how much distance we can cover in the shortest possible space of time, in order that we may say we have been to 'Jerusalem and Madagaskee' in a month. Although we admit change of work is as good as rest, we must take care that the change does not involve labour far more exhausting and prejudicial to our nerves than our every-day avocations are; therefore we will not knock ourselves up by doing in a part of one autumn what, to be beneficial to mind and body, should take a whole year, and then return to our island home, jaded, travel-worn, sleepless, and without a digestion,

and have to get a fortnight's extra leave that we may recover our health, now really shattered and broken, by a sojourn on the bracing heights of Malvern or the chalky cliffs of Thanet.

For a man 'up to his eyes in business,' as the phrase goes, for ten months out of the twelve, to undertake without a moment's pause the occupation *en amateur* of a 'Queen's messenger,' with the idea that he is doing himself good, is surely preposterous. When we are going to leave our every-day work, whatever it may be, for some time, it always accumulates towards the last, and there is a very high pressure during the final day or two, which is increased by the necessary preliminaries of packing and so forth for our trip; and it not unfrequently happens that, in order to save twelve hours, we start on the evening of the last day we are obliged to be at business. Perhaps we do not even return home after our morning's exit at nine o'clock, but meet our spouse or our *compagnon de voyage* at the railway station in the evening, leaving it to him or her to take our baggage; and consequently, in addition to the bustle and harassing we have had all day, we find ourselves crossing the Channel or steaming up to Inverness in the middle of the night, in the same dress and delightful chimney-pot in which we were scuttling through the streets in the morning.

No; we will rather begin our holiday by a week at Broadstairs or Tunbridge Wells, just to blow off the smoke, and give us breathing-time. After the scrimmage and rush of London life, with its late hours and

early rising, surely a good long sleep is worth something. A lounge over the breakfast-table, and out of the window overlooking the sea or the downs ; a stroll down to the sands with the quiet matutinal pipe in the shade of the beetling cliff ; a confab with the boatman as to the possibility of immediate prawns and lobsters, the chances of the capricious mackerel, or the prospects of the remoter herring, with dissertations on deep-sea fishery and marine topics in general, are, if not very sensational, at least restful ways of beginning our vacation. In like manner, a gurgling stream, with overhanging trees, approached by a winding path through a shady copse, redolent with the smell of active vegetation, and maybe just tinged by the golden-tipped fingers of autumn, will not be an unpleasant retreat for a few hours after our first escape from our accustomed mill-stone.

The breezy shore or shady woods contrasting forcibly with our usual surroundings ; a consciousness that we have no appointments to keep, or trains to catch, no letters to write ; nothing, in short, to do, but emphatically 'to do nothing,' ought to put us more in the way of health than anything else. Thorough idleness for a day or two should be a good preparation for more exciting enjoyments perhaps than throwing pebbles into the sea, or gathering ferns in the dingles ; but until we are quite sure that such primitive pursuits bore us more than scaling mountains, crossing glaciers, visiting cathedrals, doing picture-galleries, paddling our own canoes, or learning to ride our own velocipedes, we

should be careful how we discard the attractions of our rural or seaside retreats for the blandishments of foreign travel, with its innumerable fatigues and irritating discomforts.

FEELING THE WAY.

THE infinitude of sounds which go to make up the roar of this mighty city called London—a roar which might be likened, as we listen to it from a distance, to that of some vast mammoth of antediluvian antiquity—are so varied, that it would seem almost impossible to separate or identify them. Yet, when we are in their midst, when we trudge along the noisiest arteries of traffic, we can contrive to get some idea of the component parts of the hubbub. To analyse them in detail would be a lengthy task, but one not without interest; for it would be strange to observe that, when a few of the most obvious sources of the clatter are set aside, how curiously insignificant are the noises themselves which compose the chief bulk of the din. The human voice, for instance, would be found to have a much larger share in it than might be imagined; not necessarily when elevated to the stentorian pitch of the costermonger crying his wares, or the shouting of the drivers of vehicles or others, but in the mere ordinary tone of converse of the street wayfarers.

We should discover, if the thoroughfares were paved entirely with asphalt, and the horses and passengers shod with felt, that it is the small talk, and the small

affairs of existence, which create the unceasingly thunderous murmur in question. The old truth would be forced upon us again and again, that life is made up of trifles. These form the theme of the symphony, and the running accompaniments, large or small, only come in at intervals, like crescendos, or telling effects of light and shade. The fiddlers, or their fiddles, are the instruments which deal perpetually with the subject, whilst the double basses, horns, big drums, and cymbals are only intermittent adjuncts of the orchestra.

Stopping his ears, therefore, to the *roulage* of the roadway and to the patter of feet on the pavement, as an experiment, in default of the universal asphalte and felt shoeing aforesaid, the London peripatetic might begin his analysis with a fair chance of success. Gradually lessening the amount of moral cotton wool with which he has deadened his auricular sense, he would find that, after the human voice, the tramp of feet bore the next largest share in the cacophony. Then would follow the jingle of horses' hoofs and light carts; after these, the thunder of the heavier vehicles and wheels, the omnibuses, the railway vans, their racket modified or increased according to their passage over macadam or paving stone, would strike his attentive ear in a sort of sequence, until the whole gamut has been run through, and the full echo of the loudest tones reached.

Without, however, devoting ourselves, in our daily walks abroad, to anything approaching a careful dissection of the 'roar of London,' we can scarcely fail to be struck at times by one little element of sound, distinct

from the rest, and constantly recurring; a little sound, as it were, from quite a minor instrument in the vast orchestra, and played upon by a performer for whom we always feel, more or less, a grave interest. Taken by itself, the note he harps upon can hardly be said to be interesting or attractive from a musical point; nevertheless, there is in it a tone which, somehow, never fails to awaken our liveliest and tenderest sympathies. We contribute liberally to the maintenance of the instrumentalist who produces it, without, perhaps, always sufficiently considering whether he is really the deserving object he seems. It is enough for us that he presents very forcibly all the characteristics which we associate with his condition; and, if we do not absolutely offer him tangible assistance, we show him a consideration, in his passage along the street, which we do not accord to any other wayfarer. Let but the monotonous tapping on the pavement of the staff of the blind man catch the ear, and who does not on the instant make way for him, and push aside, and clear from his path anything or anybody inadvertently obstructing it?

At once, his helplessness goes straight to the heart; the full force of his position is conjured up in our minds as instantaneously as if his stick were a magician's wand. We dwell upon it, or not, as the case may be, for a greater or a lesser time, and if for a greater, there is perhaps no point which stands out more conspicuously in our minds, when thinking of all the miseries which blindness entails, than one of wonder at the ease with which

the sufferers from this great affliction manage to find their way about. It signifies nothing that the most casual observation shows the ordinary blind mendicant, as we meet him any day in the leading thoroughfares, to be more or less an impostor; it is sufficient that he presents the picture of a sightless man finding his way about alone, with the assistance of a stick or a dog; and this picture appeals so strongly to our feelings, that we acknowledge it by spontaneous deference and help. It does not signify that a little watching will show his apparent progress along the street to be a sham, and that he is making it up and down a given space, backwards and forwards, merely for a living; it does not signify, I insist, that we are aware he is not 'finding his way about' at all, in the sense implied by the term, and that we know him to be brought to his beat and set going much as a clockwork mouse or toy steam-carriage might be, and that he will be fetched away in due course by those dependents who batten on his so-called earnings; our first impulse is still one of compassion and wonder.

Truly, when we chance upon a positive example of the mode in which blind people *can* find their way about alone—when we really see a trustworthy honest sufferer going on his business quietly, and without ostentation threading his way through a net of thoroughfares in a large city, or along country roads and lanes and byways—our wonder is very reasonably enhanced, and our heart goes out to him more fully than ever.

The difficulty of conveying anything like an accurate notion to a blind man of where he is would, on first thoughts, appear to be one of the greatest with which the whole question of his education is fraught. Indeed, it has been positively stated by those (some of whom ought to know better) whose profession it is to instruct the sightless, that it is impossible to teach them geography. Now, at once and for ever, let it be clearly understood that this is utterly untrue; nothing more erroneous could be maintained.

Watch, as I have said, an independent honest blind man—not a blind beggar—find his way about; and the impression, until you observe him very closely, is that he must be able to see where he is going. A little occasional hesitation, an appearance of listening very attentively, a certain feeling with his stick well ahead, and these are nearly all his peculiarities; he is usually erect, and rather jaunty in his air; and beyond the fact that if in a city he will ask to be put across a street, there is really little or nothing to mark him from the rest of the passers-by.

Such an experience is common to us all. That the facility he possesses may be the result of habit to a great extent is possible; and that his real knowledge of the conformation of the earth's surface, or even of that small part of it on which his lot is cast, is as limited as a baby's, is likely enough; but do not let it be asserted and accepted, as an excuse for inaction, that he is incapable of receiving just as complete an idea of geography as of literature. You can teach him to read, and you

can teach him the shape of the globe, and the various countries upon it, just as readily. Moreover, I venture to assert that the study of locality will interest him more perhaps than any other that can be placed before him.

By the marvellous and beneficent law of compensation, which works so conspicuously in his case, he is usually gifted with a large development of what may be familiarly called the bump of locality. He comes to understand his whereabouts in a new house, room, or district with extraordinary rapidity, evidently realising distances, and the relative position of objects, with consummate accuracy.

The thanks, therefore, of the whole of his suffering class, and of all those who sympathise with it—and who in the world does not?—should be due to anybody who helps to render the acquisition of a complete knowledge of geography easy to the sightless. Such thanks are due to the British and Foreign Blind Association for having recently issued what it is not too much to call the first approach to a perfect map of England for the use of the blind. By its study with the fingers, such a picture of the land we live in may be set before the mind's eye as all the reading in the world could never equal. Of course it is in relief, or more properly speaking, *they* are in relief, for there are two maps, the one physical, the other political, it being found hardly possible to embody all the information required in *one*. The elementary or political one being of equal elevation all over, and presenting a bold ridge to the finger

on the coast-line, indicates by raised lines on its interior the county boundaries, and by a ridge and furrow, side by side, the rivers throughout the land, the ridge representing always the right bank, thus clearly indicating the direction of the flow towards the sea.

The physical map, on the other hand, gives a sufficiently truthful idea of the conformation of the country, marking out its water-sheds, table-lands, hills, and mountains with great accuracy, and is a pretty model of our island, as attractive to the eye as it is useful to the touch. Indeed, coloured, framed, and varnished, as it is, and having the names of places printed as in an ordinary flat map, it may be made a most desirable means of teaching geography to the 'seeing' as well as to those whose necessities have led to its construction. The blind, however, are helped to a perfect comprehension of the physical map by the elementary or political one, the latter having, in lieu of any natural features (save rivers and coast-lines), three hundred places indicated by numbers embossed according to the French dotted *Braille* system, and referring to an embossed index. Thus the pupils read with the finger on the map the number of any given place, and finding that number in the index, trace the name there written in the same character in full.

The great impetus which this Association has given to the consideration of the education of the blind, by the manifold improvements it has brought about in the embossed literature and other matters, will be immensely increased by the production of these maps,

which have been got up entirely under the superintendence of the blind themselves.

No little time, thought, and patience have been expended in condensing for the comprehension of the fingers the amount of geographical information contained in the maps, and, step by step, every point in the work under consideration has been tested by the executive council, which is composed entirely of gentlemen either wholly or partially blind. And the result in this, as in all matters of legislation for the sightless, will show that the only competent leaders for the blind are the blind themselves. The Association, expecting no profit from the sale of these maps, having in view the sole object of helping the afflicted, and of producing therefore the best articles at the least possible cost, are enabled to supply them at a very moderate price.


In time, it is hoped that maps of every country on the globe will be brought out on the same plan; and when such a beneficent end is accomplished, there will be no reason why travelling, with profit, should not be as common among the independent blind as among the seeing. Holman, the blind traveller, when he went forth to feel his way amongst the 'wonders of the world abroad,' had no such aid to the comprehension of his 'whereabouts' as these charts will afford to his fellow-sufferers in the present and future, and yet the manner in which he found his way about, and the enjoyment he derived from his wanderings, is a proof, if any were wanted, of how keen is the sense of locality

amongst those deprived of sight, and therefore how valuable to them will be easily obtainable maps that shall be almost as efficient in their guidance as a section of the 'ordnance' is to a traveller with eyes.

One of the first things to be obtained, when a tour is proposed through any unexplored country, is a good map of it. The most indifferent of tourists considers this an absolute necessity, and will probably condescend to take a casual look at the relative positions of the various spots included in his route. And even if nothing more were done than to enable a blind traveller to get an equally superficial idea of distances and bearings, much would be gained.

Travel and movement are always allowed to be amongst the most efficacious restoratives of health and spirits; and it is not too much to say that good maps for the blind would be an encouragement to the adoption of such remedies amongst a class of our fellow-creatures who, thrown back upon themselves by their affliction, perhaps more than any other, stand most in need of change of air; and, in spite of the paradox, I had almost written of change of scene. Ordinary mortals have their hand-books and hand-maps of travel; as easily we can supply the blind with what may be called their finger-books of travel. This has for a long time been possible, by means of the embossed literature; and now we are in a position, or soon shall be, to give them their finger-maps, as well as their books.

The elementary one will suffice for those who, had they their eyes, would not perhaps know much more of



a country that they pass through than they would without them ; for it is by no means certain that everybody blessed with sight will comprehend more than those to whom the sense is denied. Plenty of people who are supposed to be able to see are as devoid of any notion of the ' here' and the ' there,' and the aspect of places when they have visited them, as if they had been stone blind. They certainly bring away little or no recollection of them, it being doubtful, indeed, if the optic nerve has conveyed any impression whatever to the brain. For the equivalent of these amongst the blind, then, there is, as I have said, the elementary map, which is, as it were, but an outline ; whereas, for those keenly appreciative and apprehensive intellects, who take in everything that comes within their field of vision, or their field of fingers, the physical map will give a most accurately modelled picture of the country's features. The traveller with his eyes follows the road upon his map, which he has just passed along to-day, or is to proceed over to-morrow, with keen interest, embracing the various distances, calculating the time it will take to go from point to point, and what each spot will yield in beauty or interest ; enjoying almost as much this retrospective or prospective glance over the mimic plan as the being upon the ground itself. Therefore, when such maps as I have been referring to are common amongst, and easily accessible to, the blind, they will be able to enjoy and understand a tour, retrospective or prospective, equally with their unafflicted brethren. They will be able to feel their way

along Windermere to the Langdale Pikes, or from the top of Helvellyn down to Keswick, with the utmost satisfaction ; whilst a trip down the Thames to the coast, and so round the island, with its various bays and headlands, may be accomplished with even more ease and interest than could be got by the eyes out of a merely flat plan of any district.

To afford a blind man sitting at his table merely such a fund of amusement—to take no higher ground—would be a deed of some merit ; but when it is remembered of what vast use, from the educational point of view, these relief maps are likely to be, the praise due to the British and Foreign Blind Association will be readily and heartily accorded.

PLACARDS.

THE town-crier, in his original shape, is no more. Like watchmen and hackney coaches, he has faded into the limbo of the dark ages. Printing and bill-posting have acted on him much as the police have upon our ancient guardians of the night, and Hansom's cabs on the primitive vehicles of our streets. He has been wheeled away with stage-coaches, eightpenny postage, five-act tragedies, buy-a-broom women, Jack-in-the-Green, the river pageant on Lord Mayor's Day, Wellington boots, trouser straps, stand-up collars, and clean-shaven chins. He is no more thought of as a means for advertising than muzzle-loaders for infantry, scissors and black paper for portraits, or bleeding and black draughts for a pain in the big toe. No, like all these venerable institutions, he is gone—gone from our gaze like a beautiful dream; and, in his place, what have we? Why, placards!—placards everywhere, placards announcing everything, placards of all sizes, shapes, and colours, from huge posters, with letters three feet long, down to mysterious advertisements in unintelligible cipher; from 'the largest circulation in the world' of the *Daily Telegraph*, to illustrated catalogues of knives and forks. The placards on the hoardings in our city present a

curious, and eke an interesting study, as they change and vary from day to day, like dissolving views or pantomime tricks.

The announcements there made to us are sometimes astounding, but not more so than the evidence thereby given of the marvellous amount of enterprise and competition which free trade in everything opens to all. It is a hackneyed phrase to say, nowadays, that 'one man is as good as another,' and a bad joke to add 'perhaps better;' but if, by shouting or advertising our own praises, becoming in fact our own town-criers, we can prove ourselves superior to our neighbours, why, the joke is not so bad, or so utterly without meaning, after all. Not the least part, however, of the curious evidence of competition thus displayed is that portion of it which brings out the ingenuity and invention of the designers of the placards themselves. What an evident struggle there is continually going on to invent some new combination of forms, colours, or contrasts which shall catch the eye more readily than all the rest!

Now it is an actual portraiture, on a giant-like scale, of some individual who sings a song, or dances a dance, admirably executed, and, as we know, at great cost, put together on a hoarding block by block, piece by piece, and fitted with all the nicety that a paper-hanger would display in a lady's boudoir. Now it may be some equally graphic representation of a sensation scene in the last new drama or novel; or again perhaps a mere grotesque combination of words, with letters of divers colours and forms, announcing mysteri-

ously, and to the uninitiated somewhat unintelligibly, the name of a forthcoming popular periodical. Artistic representations of garments standing alone, or displayed on the graceful proportions copied from the dummy ornamenting the portals of the outfitting establishment, the

'Mart where you may buy cheap clothes,
And the wax boy stands with buttons all in rows!'

equally attract the gaze of the passer-by. Cheapness naturally advances itself as one of the leading recommendations in all advertisements, newspaper or otherwise; but our attention is now directed to placards, in the generic sense of the term: a noisy self-asserting thing; a puff, a poster, a notice; an announcement, a crier's bell ringing continually; a something which arrests your progress, and from the encountering of which perpetually at last begins to interest you; a thing that you cannot escape from, that you meet at every turn, that bores your life out, but which, at the same time, fixes itself indelibly on your memory; so that if, in the event of your ever requiring the article recommended, your mind involuntarily reverts to the name and address of the manufacturer or vendor of it, whom you inevitably end by patronising.

Elaborate oil pictures of gentlemen having their hair cut, of cattle feeding in the fields, of farmyards with pigs and poultry fattening on a particular food, curious agricultural engines, with portraits of farm-labourers, and sewing-machines with sempstresses tending them, decorate our dead walls, our omnibuses,

and our railway carriages, and render the lining of our railway stations illustrated catalogues of the commodities commonly dealt in. Night itself only partially obscures these things, for an almost equal amount of ingenuity is displayed in lit-up placards in the shape of gas-letters, transparencies of all kinds, from the sensation scene in the domestic drama to the varieties of the illuminated lamp and clock-face. But the placard pure and simple, after all, is that which is to be found on our outside hoardings; weather-stained and mud-besplashed, they ever require renewing and varying, and these are the most efficient substitutes that can be devised for our old friend the town-crier. True, that in some very remote districts the actual crier may yet be used occasionally to announce the sale of some ricks of hay or litters of pigs. Here and there a seaside watering-place is not above seeking his assistance when some fair creature has been unlucky enough to lose her bracelet or watch on the pier or esplanade. Again, like the watchman or hackney coach, he is to be found, just now and then, as it seems, chiefly to remind one of how utterly he has been superseded. An antediluvian 'Charley' of a fabulous age and inconceivable decrepitude is, or has been, till within the last few years, visible on fine nights in certain old-fashioned neighbourhoods. Wearily wheezing out the hour, he totters along in a perfectly helpless condition, and rather as it would seem by the force of long habit than from any useful purpose he can serve, or any recompense that he can receive. In like manner a hackney coach, about once or twice a

year, is seen lumbering from a railway station, covered with boxes and filled with children. The old Brighton road again boasts of a well-horsed four-in-hand stage. It is still possible to pay eightpence for the postage of a letter, but it could almost travel round the world now for the money. A few people remain, perhaps, who have somewhere lately witnessed the performance of the tragedy of *Venice Preserved*, or the *Gamester*. Buy-a-broom women, I think, are utterly gone, as certainly as the Lord Mayor's Show on the river. Spurious Jacks-in-the-Green, in outlying suburban districts, now and then may delight the eyes of boys; but they get terribly chaffed, if not pelted with mud and missiles. Anything like a respectful belief in them has undoubtedly long since come to an end. The Chain Pier at Brighton may yet retain its artist, who will cut your profile likeness on a piece of black paper, and, for sixpence extra, tint with gold your waving locks and well-arched eyebrows; and the same skilful individual's double doubtless here and there may be found accompanying the travelling menagerie as of yore. I should think, however, that these must be the only two professors of the art extant.

Muzzle-loading rifles are, or shortly will be, found nowhere save in the ranks of our volunteers. The practice of blood-letting as a chirurgical operation can only now be resorted to by the surgeons attending on navvies, miners, or other uncivilised communities. Specimens of Wellington boots, second-hand and refooted, probably might reward the search of the antiquary who

would penetrate deep into the depths of Dudley-street, St. Giles. One of our most eminent comedians has been known within the last year to appear on the stage in the gaiter-cut, tightly-strapped trousers; and I suppose here and there a City magnate of high respectability and great age may be discovered with a mutton-chop whisker and a stand-up collar swaddled round his throat with enormous folds of white linen, or held in its place by the unbending rigidity of a black-satin stock. All these relics of the past, I say, may still linger on the threshold of the present; but the old dogs have nearly had their day, hustled aside by the advance of invention and the progress of civilisation. None of them appear likely, however, to be so ably represented and their separate places so well maintained as the town-crier. He, after all, will never die; for, apart from the placards and advertisements which now do his work and take the bread from his mouth, do we not all of us know some very good amateur town-criers? people who, without payment or recompense of any kind, will placard your affairs in such a way that not only those who run may read, but those who 'sit at home at ease,' and even those who are bedridden may hear all about you? people who will stand at the street-corners ringing a bell and shouting in stentorian voices your last infamous and abominable, not to say criminal, deeds? people who are born town-criers, and can no more help being so than they can help the colour of their hair? people of an imaginative turn, who will not mind creating stories of wonderful adventures, in which you have figured as the

chief actor? You! who are the most unoffending, moral, and easy-going of mortals—why, they will show how *you*, despite this character, which you are universally known to bear, treat your wife in a horribly tyrannical way; how you imprison, half-starve, thrash her, and spend her money on presents which you make in a disgracefully unblushing manner to La Signorina Fan Tutti of the Italian Opera. They have it on undoubted authority, that, being manager of the Hubble-bubble Bangalore Banking Company (Limited), your living in the sumptuous way you do is simply the result of a nefarious use you are making of the shareholders' capital. Or because your *ménage* is moderate, you do not keep much company, and give nothing but beef and beer when a friend does dine with you, they will say that you are saving vast sums of money, not living nearly up to your income; that you are mean and penurious—a miserly fellow, forsooth, who ought, in a word, to be thoroughly ashamed of himself. There are no individuals so ready to become this kind of bill-sticker, and do your placarding, as those people who owe their acquaintance one with another to *you*, who, being introduced by you, hold you to be common property, to be dealt with accordingly. Partnerships of this sort offer wonderful facilities for town-crying. Notes can be compared; and it is notorious that two heads are better than one when invention is the faculty to be exercised. Bold reckless bawlers these!—‘stuffing the ears of men with false reports,’ utterly fearless of the legal warning, ‘Stick no bills!’

Failing even the assistance of such good-natured friends, are there not many quite capable of acting as their own town-criers? or rather, incapable of acting as anything else?—men who will placard you their own difficulties, squabbles, domestic miseries, and all the troubles that flesh is heir to? who are ‘so loose of soul’

‘That in their sleep will mutter their affairs’?

men who will set up in the market-place their ‘fantoccini’ theatre, play the drum and Pandean pipes to collect a crowd, and at the same time, with their own hands, even pull the strings and set the marionettes in motion? Marionettes, look you, that are skeletons—nothing but bones and death’s heads, the very rattle of which you can hear a mile off; and all selected from the cupboards, the very cupboards, of their owners! Men fertile of resources in this respect, who, happening to be like the venerable Mother Hubbard when she found her larder bare, will not scruple to take out the bones of your skeleton, or of anybody’s skeleton, articulate, dance, and parade them before the multitude. Men who, disappointed perhaps to find your skeleton a very little one—next to nothing indeed—will venture to fabricate one that shall be called yours, and, dressed in your clothes, that shall be announced in your name and ticketed with your card, address and all, unmistakably yours! Men who, disregarding all cautions given with respect to the locality of the laundry where dirty linen may be cleansed, never fail to let you look through them, nor will they hesitate to give you a lorgnette, by which you shall be able to

see through all your friends! Verily, transparent placards of men!—not materially so, like Marley's ghost, the back buttons of whose coat were visible from the front, or the unfortunate travellers at Mugby Junction refreshment-room, who have 'the line surveyed through them,' but men who can disguise nothing about themselves or anybody whose affairs they happen or do not happen to know. Wearing their hearts upon their sleeves for daws to peck at, they stand in a relative position to that placard so popular now at theatres or music-halls, which, as we have said, at night forms a transparency, showing you the chief sensation of the entertainment going on within.

Another, but very different, proclaimer of his own affairs, however, is conspicuous in all collections of placards. Not a transparent man this by any means; on the contrary, a very shrewd, wary, calculating crier; a man who believes thoroughly that there is nothing *so* successful as success; to whom the maxim that 'to be poor, and seem so, is the devil all over,' comes glibly enough; a man who is always making his fortune, and telling you so—moreover, *showing* you so—giving grand entertainments to prove it, which could not be given, we know, unless it *was* true—the ringer of his own bell, the blower of his own trumpet, the shouter of his own praises. You must get up uncommonly early, and sit up uncommonly late, to gain a peep into the cupboard where he keeps *his* skeleton. You know he has one, of course, somewhere, but he will take good care that you do not see it. He does not want to

look at yours—never troubles his head about it—and expects his bones to be treated with the same indifference. Capable of command, with a fine voice, and great intelligence, he is in a position to claim your attention ; and by the sound common sense he shouts, forces you, against your will, perhaps, to listen, and listening, to believe—a fellow who takes the very breath out of your body, as it were, by the promptitude and energy he displays in all his transactions. Seldom or never making a mistake, he possesses that quick decision which in others would be hasty and rash, but which, coming from him, you have perfect reliance on. A great general, with the power of pointing out where advances should be made, and getting them made on the spur of the moment ; and above all, equally capable of beating a skilful retreat, hiding his mistakes, and even winning battles by them—whose defeats are victories compared with the successes of other men. Impossible for you, wanting what he deals in, to seek it from anybody else. His placards catch your eye, his name rings in your ears at every turn—shouted by himself very likely ; but could he employ any one who could shout louder or more effectually ? No ! forsooth ; and let me tell you that if ever *you* want the services of a town-crier, you will be especially lucky if you can enlist the sympathies, or, what will do as well, make it worth the while of this ‘past master’ of his craft to give you his services.

Who, therefore, shall say that the crier is dead ? On the contrary, like the phoenix, he rises out of his

own ashes with renewed strength tenfold. Advertise ! publish ! placard ! never heed the caution 'Bill-stickers beware !' Up with your posters ; tell the world in the largest type what you are doing, or making, or selling ; and how much superior you are to your neighbours. Show up their shortcomings, and demonstrate the infamy of their proceedings. Spare no expense to invent a novelty in the shape of a placard. Get skilful artists to design you double life-sized portraits of yourself and family with which to illustrate the London hoardings. Use up the colours of the rainbow—avail yourself of all the inventions which enable you to distort, and make conspicuous, by elongation or compression, every letter in our alphabet. Devise striking monograms, and ciphers impossible to make out ; decorate with every species of pictorial illustration ; create schemes for showing that the dearest articles may be bought for a song ; indeed, produce any manner or sort of placard which shall outdo in 'loudness' those of all your neighbours. Do the utmost, in a word, of which your inventive genius is capable, but never say that the town-crier has ceased to exist.

On first thoughts, which are not always best, we imagined he had ; but no ! you, I, everybody, know him ; nay, under some circumstances, you, I, everybody, may be he ! If we cannot get the placarding that is required done for us, why, we must e'en do it ourselves ! And who shall declare that stern necessity may not, in various ways, compel this ? that we may not be obliged some day to resort to such placards as

are formed out of carpets hung over balconies—transparent representations of what is going on within? How is it possible to say that we, weak puny mortals, may not be so sorely tried sooner or later as to render it impossible for us to do other than shout our concerns to the crowd? We are healthy, strong, and determined of purpose, but what little accident may not render us the feeblest of the feeble? We step over rocks to-day, and a pebble to-morrow may trip us up. Chains of metal wrought of hardest iron cannot hold us from our intentions; we start but to subdue; pursue our way, nor looking to the right nor left, swear we can resist all syren songs, all upturned looks. Now we can cut our way through every impediment, even at the cannon's mouth; but in a week's time the cobweb gossamer of a woman's eyelash may render us as helpless as an infant, and as incapable of command as he who, after the battle of Actium, left his legions to shift for themselves, and sailed away in pursuit of the dark-browed Egyptian queen; vanquished by a single glance—the captor captive.

THE WINDMILL ON THE DOWNS.

Two speakers; an old man and a young girl. He, bowed down, passive, and enduring, his face blank, hopeless, and furrowed, more by grief than time. She, upright, defiant, full of energy and vehement action, her countenance alternately fired by indignant protest or softened by sympathetic sorrow. A strong likeness between them, notwithstanding the difference of age and complexion, for he, the bleaching of his hair and bronzing of his skin apart, is fair and Saxon-like; she a brunette, olive-tinted dark-eyed, and with tresses only one shade short of black. They are moving, under a bright September sun, slowly along a strip of garden lying between a cottage and an old windmill, in the management of which, judging by the ample powdering of flour upon their garments, both are concerned.

She says, with the very faintest foreign accent, 'I declare to you, father, that if I saw Reuben Straytor with his head upon the block of the guillotine, as I saw that wretched man in Paris of whom I have so often told you, and I had power to stay the falling knife, I declare to you, I say, I would not use it. All the misery you and I are now suffering is his work.'

'Naomi! Naomi!' interposes the old man, 'ye'll

not better matters by hard words, they be'an't like a Christian ; even if ye were sure that you could trace the great hurt that's been done us to Reuben, it be'an't fit to be so revengeful ; and as no one knows the rights of it, it's all the worse for you to talk on so. You, too, as would go yards out of your way rather nor tread on a worm !'

'Nobody knows the rights of it, father?' she says interrogatively, and suddenly standing still. 'Has not Reuben being hanging about the mill for weeks and weeks, coming to it at all hours, never missing a chance, when one of the farm men could have done the affairs quite as well—coming, in fact, upon the slightest excuse, and sometimes even upon none at all? and have you lived these many years in the world, and not seen enough of it to know that when a man does that sort of thing at a house where there is a pretty girl, there is but one conclusion to be drawn? and have not you and I, although we have never spoken of it to each other, seen enough, when Jeanette and he have met, to fully warrant such conclusion?'

'Well,' says the old man, 'if so be it's Reuben that's done us this hurt, the Lord help us, and have mercy upon him ; but I cannot think it—I cannot think it ; he was a proper good lad always, though spoilt at home.'

'What ! not think it?' replies Naomi indignantly, 'not think it now? when after these nine days of mysterious absence and total silence, and in spite of all our efforts, not a trace of her is to be found ; when we re-

member that Reuben left the farm the day that Jeanette disappeared, and actually walked into Crewhaven with her, and that he, too, is not to be heard of—can it be possible that you do not see what has happened, and that you still say nobody knows the rights of it? To me it's as clear as yonder sky! Father! father! I can hardly control myself when I think of it! The villanous coward! to trifle with and deceive an unsuspecting child like her! a fine gentlemanlike thing, to be sure; and he always talking, in his grand manner, about ladies and gentlemen, and their ways and behaviour, and trying to copy them in their voices and looks! Who is he, and who are we, that we are to be talking of ladies and gentlemen? We are millers here, with this old ramshackle tumble-down mill for our estate, and he, the son of a Flockshire farmer, whose grandfather, *ma foi*, was at the plough's tail sixty years ago! Pretty pedigrees for ladies and gentlemen, by example! I declare to you again, father, that if I saw that man dying of thirst at my feet, I would not put out my hand to give him a glass of water; if I saw him walking blindfold towards the edge of Shingle Head cliff, I would not put out my arm to stop him! *Mon Dieu*, no,' she adds, with much gesticulation, as she again moves forward.

The old man puts his arm through hers, endeavouring gently to restrain and quiet her, as he says, 'Eh! but it's a mercy you were not born a man, Naomi, for ye'd ha' given the blow first, and the word afterwards; and, as to my having lived all these years in the world,

I'd have said, if they've learned me anything, that Reuben comed here of late to look after my eldest daughter, 'stead of my youngest! I never see'd more betwixt him and dear Jeanette than betwixt him and you! I be'an't going to say that you mayn't be right, but Reuben Straytor has many friends, and is off here and there and anywhere betimes, as he likes, neither by your leave, nor with your leave, and they knows no more of him at home than if he was at the poles. You'd be as just, if you laid poor Jeanette's going from us at the door of any of those idle gaping gentlefolk visitors as come up sometimes from Crewhaven to look at th' old mill! Anyway, it's a'most broke my heart, and if I don't get tidings of her afore Michaelmas, I shall never see the beginning of another year,' and the old man buries his face in his hands.

The mill is reached now, and the girl's angry mood giving place to the tenderer one, she affectionately caresses her father as he enters its quaint old basement, and the two pass out of an autumnal sunlight, which, for a brief while, has seemed, by its cheerfulness, to mock their misery.

The mill itself? Well, it was, as Naomi Gower had said, a ramshackle old building, not such another to be found for miles amidst the many abounding upon the crests and ridges of the rolling Flockshire downs. A mill celebrated among artists, and specified by them under the name of one of their craft, who had made good stock-in-trade of it upon his canvases. A wooden

mill, black-brown, and richly weather-stained with gray, and green, and yellow, with soft moss and crisp golden lichens peeping out from the little rifts and splits under the shelter of the broad eaves of the roof, and from beneath the floor of its square bluff body, where, poised upon its circular base, it could be turned to face the prevailing wind. The wind, too, had had its share in adapting it for the artist's use, for, from long blowing against its sturdy front, and broad, sweeping, milk-white sails, it had gradually canted it back many degrees out of the perpendicular. Strangers—and there were many who came up to look at it—would think it could not much longer withstand those strong breezes for ever lunging at it upon its exposed position, and the creaking and moaning it made, if at work, would lead them to expect its immediate toppling over. Great would be their surprise to hear, if they chanced to speak with its old master, Amos Gower, that it had been like that ever since he was a boy, and that he had heard his father say that he too had never remembered it otherwise. It stood but a little back upon the turf from the white winding chalk road leading up to it, and as the huge sails, whirring and roaring through the air, swept round and round, their ends, in each succeeding descent, looking as if they must strike the earth, and only swooping clear of it by some foot and a half, one hesitated almost to pass it, so wild, inexorable, and menacing did it look. It had been said, more than once, that a barrier should be set up to prevent the unwary from going too near, as a blow from one of

those revolving beams would surely be fatal, but there never had been any accident: who ever would go too near? None but the deaf, or blind, or mad.

And so it was still left open to the road.

Hard by stood the miller's dwelling, partaking of many of the tones and colours of the mill; a thought below the crest of the height, it yet commanded fully the glorious view that made Wavingdean Down a place of note in the neighbourhood. It is even yet a pretty spot; thirty years ago when old Amos Gower owned the mill it was prettier still, for then railroads were only just beginning to scar the green slopes of the Flockshire downs, and to tunnel through their chalky depths. Many a village among the hills, since disfigured by modern brick and stucco; many a cluster of houses on the coast, since grown into a prosperous and fashionable watering-place, then retained as marked a rusticity as if they had been a couple of hundred, instead of only fifty, miles from London.

Conspicuous upon the sea-board was Wavingdean Down, with its solitary old windmill and miller's cottage, and though it attracted occasional visitors from the neighbouring little port and primitive health resort of Crewhaven, the enjoyment of the view was left in those days pretty much to Amos Gower and his family.

Amos Gower himself? Well, he had inherited the property of the mill from several generations; had married the daughter of a well-to-do French skipper plying between a Normandy port and Crewhaven; had

received a trifling 'dot' with her, enough to make a pretty addition to his simple earnings. When, after but a few years of wedded life, he found himself left a widower, with two little girls, one an infant, and the other between four and five years old, he thought of little beyond their welfare. Untaught himself, he desired to give his children a good education, the advantage of which he had seen in his wife; so the elder had been sent to Paris, not to a fashionable school, but to some homely people, distant connections of her mother. She had returned to the quiet old life upon the downs about a year, when the sorrow of which we have had a hint befell the Gower household. Full of her foreign experience, she had come like a being from another world upon the prosaic existence of her father and sister. The latter had emerged into budding womanhood since Naomi had been away, and listened eagerly to all the stories and events her sister had to relate. Jeanette was wild with the desire to taste for herself these pleasures and wonders, and when her request that she too might be sent for a while to Paris was refused by the kind old man, on account of a change in the family where Naomi had lived, she rebelled. The fiery spirit of the French blood she inherited felt itself aggrieved, and altogether, for the last few months, things had not been as happy as they might have been at the old windmill upon the downs.

Then, as to this Reuben Straytor? Well, the miller's daughter has given some account of his pedigree. His father's farm stood in the little hamlet of

Wavingdean, which lay in the valley at the foot of the down, therefore it is not wonderful that he and the little Gower girls should have been playmates from their earliest days. As they grew up, the separations which school-times brought about gradually increased, and when Naomi, at the age of fourteen, went abroad for four years, Reuben, who was a good deal older, was finishing his education at a certain Flockshire college, and came home soon after, as his father designed, to drop into the farming life. But this did not suit the taste of the young fellow, who had acquired notions of a loftier kind. With the indulgence generally accorded to an only son, it was settled that he should read for the law, and he went to London for the purpose. He liked law, however, no better than farming, and it was whispered that he had idled his time, made doubtful acquaintances, and fallen into habits of luxury, if not dissipation. His father certainly had to pay a considerable amount of debt, and Reuben once more came back for a time to the old home, to give him, as he said, an opportunity of looking out for something else; came back to the old home to find his little playmates of yore grown into blooming girls, the elder on the verge of womanhood, and the younger, though still almost a child in years, looking as much a woman as her sister.

Then ensued the dalliance referred to, and, according to her father's account, so misunderstood by Naomi. She, truth to say, had not been insensible to the attractions which Reuben possessed. His tall

gentlemanly figure, handsome face, and pleasant manner contrasted strongly with the usual run of farmers' sons. But he had made no sign which could be interpreted as reciprocal of her feelings. He really was too honourable to contemplate matrimony until a course in life had been permanently adopted. He certainly had been constantly up at the mill, and what more natural? For having nothing to do at home, he would occasionally undertake small affairs of business for his father with his neighbours, and the miller and the farmer necessarily had constant dealings together. Besides, were not Naomi and Jeanette his oldest friends? And the former had much to say that was worth listening to about her foreign travels. Familiarity was to be expected, and he went and came, as it seemed, under the circumstances, in a perfectly natural and likely manner.

Suddenly Jeanette disappears. She is in the habit of tripping down into Crewhaven upon the slightest pretext, and has become fonder of so doing of late. She differs from her sister in disposition; is vain, frivolous, likes display in dress, a coquette withal, with flashing eyes, which have an intuitive knack of making their meaning plain. Very French in nature, chafing more or less at the home life, and much more since Naomi's return, yet a most lovable little creature, and by the same token very dear to father and sister. So that, on an unusually stormy September evening, by the time she should have been seen returning by the

Crewhaven road, and was not so seen, an anxiety, rapidly growing into dread, seized upon the hearts of the two watchers at the mill—watchers, for Naomi shared in her father's simple toil. The work came easily, and was not new, her tastes ever rather inclining to simple household duties befitting her station than to action in a wider sphere.

She loved the old mill and all connected with it, had understood its action from a child, knew how to manage it, and fed it at a pinch when the tinkling of the bell high up upon the shooting floor told that the supply of grain was running short. Unlike her sister, she loved the country, too. Her native downs had more lasting charm for her than anything the gayest capital in the world had offered. Thus, late on the September evening aforesaid, Naomi is high up in the mill, and, as darkness gradually begins to shut the storm-swept landscape from the sight, she looks out from the window, expecting, as usual, to descry Jeanette's trim little figure coming along the Crewhaven road, which, from that point of vantage, lies before her like a silver edging to the green mantle of the downs where they trend towards the sea. But it is now deserted, not a sign of life upon it. Naomi pauses still, for where it passes some farm-buildings and a small plantation it cannot be seen; and so she thinks her sister is just thereabouts, perhaps. No; there has been plenty of time, had she so been, for her to have now emerged into sight at the foot of the down, and—where the ascent begins. Again she scans the white—

line from end to end, and while she does so it melts into the drift of rain-cloud sweeping up from the sea, and the autumnal twilight comes to an end.

Then, to her father straight. 'What has become of Jeanette? Foolish child to stay so late!' Much consultation. Some discussion as to the prudence of these constant visits to the port. Time goes on; it is nine o'clock; it has been dark more than an hour, and still the truant does not come home. Stokes, the miller's man, is despatched with a lantern to Wavingdean Farm, and thence, should he get no tidings there, to the town, in all a round of some four miles; thus it may be twelve o'clock before he can be back, wind, weather, and inquiries duly considered. At last he comes, and alone; not a sign, not a word of Jeanette. She was seen in the town, near the just-opened railway station; but that was quite early in the day. Mr. Reuben, they told him at the farm, had walked with her in the morning into Crewhaven; but he had not come home, and had said it was probable he should take the train to London.

O, the misery, the agony of that night, and of the nine days and nights of fruitless search and hopeless inquiry which followed! followed in drear succession, until that morning towards the end of the month, when, by her fierce words, we have seen what Naomi's solution of the mystery was.

By noon on that same day, old Amos Gower, having returned to his cottage, was seated by his fireside. His

despondency had grown heavier daily, and this morning he had quite broken down, and left the mill in Naomi's sole charge, for Stokes was away on some business touching the grain, and hence it came to pass that she was quite alone in the old mill as she stood looking out from the little window of the grinding floor.

A brighter sun never shone upon an autumn noon ; the crests and ridges of the hills rose up clear and sharp ; the tearing fury of the equinoctial gales of the last few days had subsided into a strong southerly breeze, which was sending the old mill sails spinning round merrily. Naomi was looking, we have said, from the window ; but it was not at the scene. She was looking into the far distance of her conjectures, into the remote realm of the possible and the probable, speculating, with a dreamy miserable foreboding, upon the fate of the dear missing sister. Mechanically only did she turn her eyes in the direction of that part of the road which, emerging from the farm buildings and plantations, began to wind round the foot of the steep hill. Mechanically only was it at first that she looked to see who the horseman was that had just appeared ascending the white lane. Presently, however, there flashed from those eyes a fire by no means mechanical. Her whole countenance, indeed, lighted up as it might have done had she been facing the glow of a red sunset instead of the cool gray of midday. Her lips quivered for an instant and then became rigid, whilst her nostrils dilated, and her dark brow was sternly knit. She passed one of her large but comely hands once or twice

across her forehead, and then, driving her fingers into her thick, wavy, dark hair, clutched it fiercely. For a moment or two more she still stood intently observing the rider, as he urged his horse at the fullest pace the steep ascent would allow. When he was about half-way she quickly drew back, as if to avoid being seen, but continued watching him through the crack by the hinges of the little wooden shutter of the window. As this opened upon one side of the mill, Naomi, where she stood, would have lost sight of the horseman as he came close up and passed round to the door; but he did not pass round, for the horse, a rough vicious-looking brute, covered with sweat and foam, shied, and refused to go by the front of the mill, where the sails, in full swing, were whirring round with their rushing, chopping, monotonous noise, and, as usual when the wind obliged them to be set to the south, within a few yards of the narrow unprotected road.

An obstinate contest between rider and animal ensued; whip and heels were freely used. The creature plunged and reared violently, swerving from side to side, and doing all it could for mastery. But at last the rider got the best of the struggle, and with a tremendous lunge, the horse dashed forward out of Naomi's sight. The agitated and angry thoughts which evidently possessed her whilst she was watching the approach of the rider had been for an instant half diverted by the tussle between him and his animal; but as they vanished from her sight, her agitation seemed to be returning, when again it was arrested; this time by a

strange and awful cry, which rose high above the clatter and din of the heavy machinery of the mill; a cry part shriek, part wail, part moan, hardly a human cry, but one which struck a chill to Naomi's heart. With the agility of an antelope she flew down the narrow ladder to the dressing floor, and out into the open air by the stair from the doorway at the back of the mill. She appeared to divine something of what had happened, for, with a face now nearly as white as the dust of the meal with which she was besprinkled, she hurried round on to the road. The sight which there awaited her might have made stronger nerves quiver. Horse and man lay apparently dashed to death by a blow, or many blows, from the inexorably revolving mill sails. At the first glance both, indeed, seemed to be within their fell swoop; but when Naomi had sufficiently collected herself, she saw that the horse had been thrown quite clear of the sails by that stroke from them which had smashed in the whole side of his head, and doubtless killed him in an instant.

It was hardly possible to believe, however, that the man could be beyond the death-dealing circuit of the sails. Each one, as it swept down to within that foot and a half from the ground, looked as if it was striking him at every turn, for he lay stretched face downwards, with his head exactly upon the spot where the beam passed the closest to the grass; but he was motionless, and as long as he so remained was as safe as if he had had his head upon his own pillow. But should he move or raise it only an inch or two, he would in-

evitably share the fate of his horse. Yet could he raise it? Was it likely? This was what Naomi asked herself, as, with a rush of conflicting emotions, she stood as near as she dare, bending forward towards him.

And if he could, should she let him? He was evidently not dead, only stunned—his breathing and the twitching of one of his hands told her that—and, as far as she was able to see, he was otherwise uninjured. He had fallen, probably, as if by a miracle, clear of the sails, and had received no blow save from coming in contact with the ground. If this were so, then in another minute he might recover and would move. He would raise his head, and in yet another minute he might have his brains dashed out before her eyes. And should she stir a hand to avert this fate? Should she save this man who had so deeply, so cruelly wronged her, and brought shame and sorrow upon the gray hairs of her beloved father? The very words she had used but an hour before, in the depth of her jealous and revengeful feelings, rushed back into her mind—‘If I saw Reuben Straytor with his head upon the block of the guillotine, and I had power to stay the falling knife, I would not use it!’ And here he lay before her in almost an equivalent situation.

Her fierce nature wavered, but, happily, not for long. A motion of the prostrate man’s arm recalled her to her better self. He turned his body slightly, and showed his face: she saw his eyes open, and saw them wince as the deadly sail passed close above them.

Why had she delayed so long? why had she not rushed back and stopped the mill? She dare not go now, it was too late! he would recover while she was gone! In his stupefied state, she could not make him understand the imperative necessity of lying still. She feared even to speak, lest he might look up at her!

Without a moment's further hesitation, she threw herself flat upon the ground, and creeping to within arm's length, and in fearful proximity to the mill sails, seized him by the collar, and with a tremendous effort dragged him into safety, just as the bewildered man raised his head, and passed a hand across his dazed eyes.

By the miller's fireside, an hour later, Reuben Straytor is seated, pale, and still somewhat confused, but unhurt. It seems that the stupor caused by his fall has saved his life; for although his unmanageable horse had blindly dashed within range of the mill sails, the animal had thrown him into perilous safety, just as its death-shriek rent the air.


Naomi and her father, soothing him and administering restoratives, are bending over the young man; the girl's face beaming with its tenderest expression, for she has been assured of Jeanette's safety, and knows that her suspicions were all groundless.

When, after a while, Reuben is able to tell his story in detail, this is what he relates:

'Throughout the summer and autumn, a day hardly passed when there was not to be seen the figure of a

certain man lurking under the shadow of the copse by our barns at the foot of the down. He was staying at Crewhaven, probably to recruit his health, one of the many idlers there, but one whom I chanced to know by sight—chanced to know as a thoroughly dissipated scoundrel; my London experience had taught me that. You both here had never observed him, I daresay, but I had, and my suspicions were aroused; Jeanette was hardly likely to have escaped his evil eye. Once I saw him talking to her near the town. I hesitated to say anything about it, for the sake of your peace of mind, hoping that with his absence all would be well again: and here was my only error.

‘Nine days ago I started, bag in hand, for Crewhaven, meaning to run up to London to see about a matter that promised an opening for me. Just as I was leaving the farm, Jeanette came up, and we walked on together. In two minutes I could tell that I was in the way. She tried a hundred pretty little devices to get rid of me, and when we came to the turning to the station, I bade her good-bye. I had taken my seat in the train when I saw her again; she was on the platform with this man, and evidently in great trepidation. There was rather a crowd about, but I did not lose sight of her; and, to my great surprise, instead of their both getting into a carriage, she only entered, he handing her a small bag as she did so. He leant in at the carriage window for a moment, and directly afterwards the train was in motion, and he left standing on the platform.



‘I was amazed, but my course was clear. I would not lose sight of her. At the first station we stopped at I thought I would get into the same carriage, then I decided it would be better not. I would take care, however, that she did not leave the train without my knowing it. At Redhill Junction there was a crowd again; still I could have sworn that the door of the carriage in which Jeanette was had not been opened. Then the train went through to London without stopping. It was four o'clock. I went straight to the carriage, fully determined what to do. To my dismay, she was not in it; yet I was so quick that the other passengers had not even begun to leave it. Then I looked in some others—looked everywhere: not a sign of her. I flew to the guard, described her. “Yes, sir, the young lady got out at Redhill.” Impossible, I thought; yet so it was, he assured me. A train on the other platform was about to start for Ashford, and would pass Redhill, of course. Without hesitation I got into it, and by six o'clock was back again there. All my inquiries for a time seemed hopeless. Then a station clerk thought a young woman answering my description had taken a ticket some hours before to Ashford, the farthest point towards Dover to which at present the railway is open. I could only follow her that night by the mail at eleven o'clock.

‘How I thought of you both, who shall say? How I pictured your agony and despair! but there was no way of letting you know what I knew; indeed, what had I to say? I could not even tell for certain that I

was on her track, since that I had now so unhappily missed her. But I determined to go on, and not to leave a stone unturned till I had discovered the foolish thoughtless child.

‘Arrived at Ashford, I found there were coaches waiting to take on passengers to Dover. In the bustle and darkness, I could get no answers to my questions even. At first I could not decide whether to go on at once, or stay till the morning. Suppose she had not gone to Dover, and was even then waiting here for her tempter to join her? for that that was to happen, sooner or later, I felt a certain foreboding. No! I would wait at least for the next train, and meanwhile knock up the landlord of every inn in the place. I got no hint of her, until a return coach from Dover, the following morning, came in to meet another London train. The guard of this remembered such a young person going on with him the previous afternoon; and thus I saw how it was that valuable time had been lost.

‘Then I wanted wings; I fretted and raged through the many hours that intervened before reaching Dover. Again it was night, and again I was at fault. I spent many miserable hours wandering down to the steam-boat quay, going on board the mail-boat, searching and inquiring everywhere with no result. The whole of the next day and the next were passed in this fruitless manner. Towards the evening of this, which was the fourth day, being in the coffee-room of one of the hotels where the coaches pull up, and being on the point of

writing to you both, who should I see getting down from a stage-coach that had just arrived from Ashford but the man to whom all this mischief was due. Hope returned. I felt sure Jeanette was waiting for him, and come what may, I said, she shall be found.

‘It was about seven o’clock; the tide was out, and passengers for the French packet would have to go off in small boats to where she lay, outside the harbour, the custom under such circumstances. Save for a few minutes, I never lost sight of the man again, but I did not let him see me, for I wanted him to guide me to *her*. He took a boat from the stairs, and I, another. He went up the side of the packet but a few moments before I followed him. Then, however, in the coming darkness and the crowd I lost him for a while, but I knew he was on board, and had a conviction that she was also; so hope never died. When I next discovered him, he was down in the cabin, and Jeanette, sobbing and in tears, standing beside him.

‘Unluckily, by that time the steamer had got under way, had cast off all boats from the shore, and there was no return. We must all three cross to Calais. I cared little for this, however, my satisfaction was too great. Then I disclosed myself; and I will not weary you with details of what ensued—of how he blustered and swaggered at first, and then cringed like a coward when I threatened him with the law; how I reminded him that abduction was a serious crime, and that aid would be instantly granted me from our consul at Calais, if he did not immediately resign Jeanette into

my hands ; of Jeanette's misery, and then her gratitude at the rescue : for she had had time to repent of her rash act.

'She will tell you, in good time, what she has suffered—of the sorrow and agony of those two or three days of lonely journeying and waiting, which this selfish rascal did not hesitate to subject her to, forsooth, because he imagined that by remaining a couple of days at Crewhaven, after her disappearance, he would divert all suspicion from himself.

'I brought her back from Calais by the next boat that started, but that was not for more than eight-and-forty hours ; for these terrible gales allowed nothing to leave the port for that time. You will understand now why I at first did not, and then could not, write ; why you have been obliged to suffer the agony and suspense of these last nine days. We travelled with all speed when we once started, and reached Wavingdean Farm but an hour or so ago. Jeanette is there now, safe, with my mother. She dared hardly meet you till I had a little prepared the way. I seized the first horse I came upon in the stable, and galloping as fast—'

The narrative is here arrested by a low tap at the door ; Amos Gower goes to open it, Reuben turns, and sees Jeanette folded in the arms of her father and sister.

Be sure, the joy that then ensued shut off at once, and for ever, all but the faintest reference to the past.

Long before Amos Gower was carried to his last

resting-place, however, Reuben Straytor had very effectually persuaded Naomi that her father was right in imagining that it was his elder, and not his younger daughter who had been the attraction at the old mill. With Naomi Gower for his wife, Reuben Straytor soon dropped contentedly into the farming life; and Jeanette, her roaming spirit never quite tamed, married an enterprising young trader just as he was on the point of emigrating to Canada; where, in one of the French settlements, she has become a dame of considerable importance, and where her harmless little vanities and coquetries have had fairer scope than they could have found amidst the simple folk who peopled the Flockshire downs.

A STUDIO PARTY.

WHAT a pleasant party it was! One of many, truly, but, being the last of a series, seeming to be the best; just as to some people the last pleasant thing is always the best—the last fruit we taste, the last song we hear, the last advice we get. And so now it is the last studio party that is uppermost is the best. What a genial lot of fellows were assembled! How the whole atmosphere rang with mirth and laughter, with joke-cracking, keen intelligent talk, and bright wit! How the arguments waged here and there, with admirable temper, were listened to and backed by each set of partisans!—arguments on subjects full of vital interest, artistic, literary, essentially humanising and elevating, making the ordinary tittle-tattle about people and their doings sound as if it came from the bills of geese, rather than from the lips of men; showing, it may be, why the *true* artist, of whatever denomination, is oftentimes so intolerant of inartistic society, and why he clings so pertinaciously to his kind: why the Bohemian in him must always crop out a little more or less, excusing it even when it is more, much more than it should be. The sympathy which is as essential to his existence, as water to a fish,

being absent, he naturally kicks and plunges, outrages, may be, and contemns those who give it him not.

Take yonder gay, bright, genial old Jack Dolman as an example. A true Bohemian with very simple tastes, and able to make himself at home in any society if it yield but one whiff of the afflatus which is his meat and drink; a perfect gentleman, independent and outspoken—blatant at times, and causing unaccustomed eyes to open wide and jaws to drop a little. Listen to him, as he descants upon a picture in progress standing upon an easel. Not a word of praise, save where praise is due; no conventional politeness because it is the work of a dear friend or a noble lord, but plenty of discriminating admiration for the finest points, ready good-natured fun for the weak ones, and monstrous sarcastic humour on occasions, if the chaff be taken up and turned towards himself.

‘See here, old fellow! You must alter her nose—it is not sufficiently classical at present. Because it pleased Heaven to give your model the first that *turned up*—“tip-tilted, like the petal of a flower,” as Tennyson has it—you need not make Corinna snub!’

Then, as the quiet chuckle or the hearty laugh goes up through the blue wreaths of the fragrant smoke, filling the air, he applauds earnestly the colour, or the drawing, or the any-something on the canvas that touches him home. Look, too, at Jack Dolman himself, with his clean-shaven cheeks and chin; short, thick, curly silver hair and heavy moustache to match; clear gray eyes, well-chiselled features, and bronzed skin.

Look at his broad shoulders, stalwart figure (five feet eleven), at his sinewy nervous hands, at his loose velvet garb, and swinging walk and motion; and you say 'distinguished!' and wonder how old he can be. You know of what family he comes, and judge he must be much older than he looks, despite the silver afore-said, which may be remembered in its present state these twenty years past, and when it could have had no reference to his birthday. You are puzzled, and think he may be any age. You give your speculations words, in the ear of the tall cigarette-smoking swell in evening dress, one of his intimates, and a capital amateur artist to boot, who, smiling, replies, 'Dolman? O, he must be over eighty. Eh?' (*to the man himself*) 'is it not so, dear old boy? You are. Now come, confess you are over eighty?'

Jack meets the chaff, as he takes his pipe from his mouth, with as good a *mot* as he ever uttered:

'Over eighty? O, yes, I confess, I have often been over-(eighty-ed) rated!'

There are one or two of his works about the rooms, some *swaps*, using studio parlance, it may be, or lent for this especial evening to add to its art attractions. These will show Dolman's versatility, and explain how it is that he has never been quite the successful man with his brush that he ought to be. The public demands a line, a special line, and also that a man, having chalked it out, should stick to it. The public resents, save in rare cases, a landscape by a portrait-painter, or *vice versa*, and usually demands the artist's

blood, if he unexpectedly betrays a talent for historical episodes. And so Jack Dolman has suffered in pocket from now doing crayon portraits, now studies from the life in oil, now water-colour sketches from nature, now copies from Gainsborough or Sir Joshua. But he has not suffered as a true artist; he is *that* to the backbone; he will always paint what it pleases him to paint, and what he feels. This is what the public cannot forgive; but, as his brethren do, heartily, the veteran is quite happy and content. He has the gift of living in the present; it is his true source of happiness, and thus he can seldom be taken at a disadvantage. He gets as much enjoyment out of mere existence, when smoking his pipe and looking over a gate into a field, as many people do in the midst of their most coveted pleasures. Nature, in her simplest moods, amply satisfies him; and in a country lane or a London street, his keen eye will never miss a form, an effect, or a bit of colour which yields the slightest element of artistic beauty.

The entertainer of the evening—the owner of the studio? Well, *he* has not been unsuccessful—pretty plain *that*, as this glorious room, anterooms, and approaches sufficiently testify. Ample means and perfect taste have had their way here. Those carefully thought-out tints and colours, on walls, doors, dados, cornices and ceilings—those cabinets, chairs, and tables—those choice ebony-framed etchings, sketches, and pictures—panelled here and there, and intermixed with rare pottery and china—those curtains, rugs, and mats, selected with an eye to a completely harmonised variety—those

innumerable objects of art abounding everywhere, on shelves and mantelpieces—those details of exquisite beauty carried through the whole,—leave no doubt that our host has stuck to his line with a vengeance, and made it pay.

And his line? Well, say it is good art, and thoroughly warrants his success, albeit it is rather that of the designer and the colourist than the poet and the painter. He has had a struggle, but fifteen years of indomitable energy backed by capacity has brought him from a mean third floor in Fitzroy-street, with its clay pipes and pewter pots, to this present pass at Kensington—has brought him to be the entertainer and esteemed friend of some of the best talent and genius in London. And the talent and genius appreciate him the more on account of their having passed through pretty similar ordeals. So that Miles Burnish, when he sends out invitations for a studio party, is sure to have them gleefully accepted. Everybody knows that he will meet there the people he most wishes to meet. The brush, the chisel, the pen, the orchestra, the stage, and even occasionally the pulpit, the bar, and the sword, are represented in force. The general enjoyment, of course, is largely due to that congenial atmosphere, which (tobacco apart) would take the breath out of the *habitué* of the merely so-called ‘good society.’

Brain, lay or professional, is the passport of admission to these gatherings; the lay element is there to a considerable extent; for the accomplished amateur with many a handle to his name, and the lordly young strip-

ling with more intellect than his class is usually accredited with, find, in the society of clever men for whose pursuits they have an inborn sympathy, a pleasant change from the vapid inanities but too common in those 'highest circles' in which they are supposed to move and have their being. These young scions of nobility, however, are thoroughly welcome, for one touch of art, equally with nature, 'makes the whole world kin.'

It is the eve of the Royal Academy Exhibition, and a few notable canvases, from the brushes of some of the host's closest allies, are standing about on easels in the studio, awaiting removal to Burlington House; and long before the oysters and Chablis are announced the talk runs high about their merits, and their probable fate at the hands of the Council. A portrait of a gray-bearded, massive-headed old man particularly attracts attention.

'Judged by the standard of the late Mr. Vandyke, it leaves a good deal to be desired,' says little bald-pate Max Limner, in his most sarcastic tones, which, by the way, being high, slow, quaint, and clear, give all his utterances peculiar character and point; and now, as he refers to the hands in the picture, he urges that, 'though the colour and execution are good, the drawing is very faulty.'

'Perhaps,' cuts in rosy-faced, portly old Dabbleton, a distinguished amateur; 'but colour and execution are worth something, and you seldom or ever find very accurate drawing going with them.'

'Precisely,' cries Limner; 'because, when you do, you find a very great painter; and a very great painter is a very rare being. That is what I intended to imply by my reference to Mr. Vandyke, of lamented memory; and I could point to one or two more like him, who have gone from amongst us—such as certain obscure professors by the names of Velasquez, Holbein, Hogarth, and one Reynolds, familiarly spoken of as Sir Joshua. They had the knack—yes, indeed!'

'Ah, there's little Max, finding fault as usual, and making odious comparisons,' whispers a drawling, suave, handsome, much-dressed gentleman into Dabbleton's ear. 'Limner is really too hard upon the moderns; he has said one or two "doosid" uncivil things about my Gothic designs at Winterstowe, I can tell you. I know him—a selfish, disappointed little brute,' adds this eminent architect, as Dabbleton and he throw themselves into a seat, side by side.

'Disappointed, certainly,' replies Dabbleton, 'but not altogether so selfish as you would think. Now I put it to you, my friend: there's Max Limner, hard upon sixty, has remained single all his life; lives by himself, and to himself; and is called by everybody a selfish old bachelor. Now I put it to you, I say, which of the two is the more selfish, he or his brother Ernest, who, at the age of twenty, and being in receipt of some fifty pounds a year, marries a girl without a penny, has ten children, one after another, as fast as he can, and then dies, and leaves Max to take care of the widow and family? Ernest never denied himself the pleasures of

matrimony—not a bit of it: he did not allow any selfish thoughts for the future to interfere with his present enjoyment: there was no selfish caution about him! He must have a home and a family, and anybody may pay for the one, and keep the other. Poor Max is the “anybody;” and he, forsooth, because he cannot afford to marry in the face of such responsibilities, is called a selfish old bachelor! Damme! I have no patience with the world, and its cant on such points. We know nothing of each other—not one of us. Limner seems to you what he seems to many—an unrenowned portrait-painter, and a sayer of hard things; but, after what I have told you, you’ll give him credit for a tender heart as well, I hope; and,’ adds Dabbleton, as he finishes his somewhat oracular discourse, ‘you must admit that, if he now and then says a severe thing, you never hear him say a stupid one!’

Lounging amidst the throng, these scraps of character and talk crop up, and one is puzzled to know which sense has the prior claim to attention, sight or hearing—for, be it said with all respect, the strangest and most eccentric-looking dogs abound. Clever fellows all, as we know; but how one longs that some of them would get their hair cut!

Yonder short, hatchety, pale-faced, thin, dark man lets it grow, lank and dank, almost to his shoulders, adding, in conjunction with the single tuft on his chin, yards in effect to the length of his countenance, as if it were the presentment of the artist as seen in a spoon held upright! What wonder that the eminent carica-

turist Spangarno, the little dark, lively, thick-set man who is observing him so closely, should probably reproduce him in a cartoon-portrait when the painters of the period are dealt with by the dexterous pencil ?

Again : yonder tall, broad-faced, snub-nosed, rubicund party wears his thick, sandy, dapple-gray hair brushed out all round his head, as if it had just been touzled in a hand-to-hand contest with the hook-nosed man he is talking to ; and who, in his turn, appears to be trying to hide the results of the scrimmage which has cost him well-nigh all his locks, by bringing wisps of what is left of them at the back across to the front, and securing them there by an imperfectly hidden piece of elastic.

Once more : that jockey-like little man, red, as the phrase goes, about the gills, is marvellous as to hair ; for, fitting somewhat close to the sides of his head, it stands bolt upright on the top, suggesting utter defiance of any attempt to put a hat on, and as though its owner's intention was to add to his stature by the exaltation of his thatch. Each one seems bent on exaggerating his personal characteristics. Thin and narrow men do all they can to make themselves look thinner and narrower ; broad round men spread themselves out sideways by every possible contrivance. The spoon-portrait simile will apply to each and all, according to whether the domestic instrument he held horizontally or perpendicularly. The 'curled' locks are not entirely absent either, as that handsome, stout, slovenly, velvet-coated old gentleman smoking the long

china-bowled German pipe testifies; and (so strangely unconscious are we of there ever being anything peculiar in our own habits) he tells you placidly, as he blinks benignantly at the company, that 'it's a sad pity some of these chaps don't go to the barber!'

Old Sam Honeysett seems to be quite oblivious of the fact that Charles-the-First curls, hanging down to the neck, are conspicuous, and do not go well with nineteenth-century clothes. His own beard is as unkempt and ragged as a crow's nest; but he will say, with the utmost complacency, 'Good God! look at that fellow's beard; it hasn't had a comb through it for months. Such a pity to be so careless!' And, truly, in the matter of beards, as in hair, some of your artistic celebrities are open to comment. Being people who are supposed to have an especial eye for the beautiful, and who display the greatest taste in all matters appealing to the sight, it is strange how they occasionally lose no chance of disfiguring their own persons. They will wear the most ill-assorted colours, the worst-made clothes, and of the most unbecoming and unpractical cut, as though there were something derogatory and contemptible in conforming to customs which, if not exaggerated, are at least convenient, and set 'the human face and form divine' off to some advantage. Strange, too, that the contrasts which such a gathering as this affords do not strike them. Do they not see, for instance, what a far more pleasant exterior is presented (leaving good looks out of the question) by yonder upright, soldierly-looking personage than by

the man he is talking to? They are both in evening dress, both equally well favoured by nature; but the one just takes decent care of himself, has his hair properly trimmed, his garments made to fit him easily, and, if he lounges, lounges like a gentleman; whilst the other evidently cuts his hair himself, if it ever be cut at all, slouches like a ploughboy, and apparently has been dressed by the same bucolic individual's tailor.

In the streets or in the fields, the contrast would be equally strong, for the wonders in wideawakes and inappropriate pea-jackets which, now and then, your artist yields to, are astounding. The soldier is not a fop, but the painter looks like a backwoodsman in town for a holiday. Of course we know he is a much cleverer fellow than his companion, who is only an able sketcher as well as warrior. Indeed, the artist is a very eminent man; but would he be one wit less so if, by the smallest expenditure of care, he avoided this disregard of personal appearance? He paints pictures full of the most delicate and subtle beauties, showing an intimate knowledge of costume and its appropriate accessories, its colour and its cut; his house is appointed, down to the minutest details, with the rarest regard to the gratification of the eye: why, therefore, in the name of all that is rational, should he not carry out these principles upon his own person, instead of flying directly in their face by making a veritable guy of himself?

Old Honeysett says, 'He looks like a foreman of works,' and that he 'expects every minute to see him

pull a two-foot rule out of the seam pocket of his trousers.'

'Peter Dumpher began as a drawing-master, you know,' goes on Honeysett, 'but did not make much hand of it. His dress and manners were against him. The young ladies declared that he never explained anything to them, but just went muddling on with his own sketch for a lesson, without a word; and although the mammas and the governesses thought that he behaved very properly, and were not afraid of the girls falling in love with him, they didn't like the whiffs of tobacco hanging about his beard. Terrible nonsense, that teaching, after all! I tried it once, but I found I could only teach the people that could not learn; the clever ones could teach themselves. Terrible lot of humbug in drawing-mastering. The best artists are seldom the best masters; you want a gentlemanly, nice-looking chap with a good address—like Fillian, over there—more than a first-rate painter. Then he'll make lots of money by teaching.'

'After all, I am not sure there is greater humbug amongst the drawing-masters than the painters,' here breaks in little Limner. 'A hundred years hence hardly one of the present men's names will be known; and long before that I believe there will be a great explosion, and the heirs of the people who have given thousands of pounds for modern pictures will find them not worth as many shillings. There'll be a *burst-up*, sir! and very properly; and the only pity is that it won't leave behind a fatty stench or something to warn the future

buyers. A parcel of untrained inexperienced youngsters, not without talent perhaps, but requiring years for its development, yet vamped up by a few mercenary dealers, and the press, and receiving preposterous prices for their earliest productions, cease to improve from that moment, and Mammon instead of Minerva becomes their idol ever after.'

'Talking about me, eh, Limner?' here interposes a tall broad-shouldered young giant, gentleman-like and distinguished, and at the same time suggesting one of Alaric's Goths dressed by Poole.

Kindly and cheery is Gerald Bucanna, as his twinkling eye and boisterous yet good-natured laugh proclaim; Goth-like only in form and bearing, and with an overwhelming whirlwindish manner, recalling visions of invaded Italy.

'Well,' he adds, 'the dealers don't do much for me, whatever the press does. I have as fine a collection of my own works as any painter in England. I am the proud possessor of nearly everything I have exhibited during the last seven years; and I am twenty-seven to-day. Never mind! ha, ha! they'll see the error of their ways soon! Yes, this is my birthday,' he rattles on, 'and look, what I've had given to me. I shall wear it, it is just my form.'

Bucanna, who comes of a good family, and is a man of fortune, has, notwithstanding, all his life declared for the artist's career. He disdains the name of amateur, and works as diligently as if his bread depended on it. He is a great favourite everywhere, and a little knot of

friends soon gathers round him to examine a gem of great antiquity, set in a massive gold ring, and which he is flourishing on the forefinger of his large right hand.

'What a beautiful thing!' interposes Sam Honeysett. 'Dear me! I wish I was only twenty-seven, and then perhaps I should have a present too!'

'Ah, so do I,' cries little Limner, 'for then perhaps I should have a future!'

The sally is acknowledged with laughter and cries of 'O, O!' whilst the shifting crowd brings into prominence other amusing elements.

One particularly claims attention through the ear, for the strange appearance of some of the shining lights in the art world is now and then accompanied by strange sounds. Our dear good friend Tarbox is disputing with — a bystander the merit of a certain person's painting—— The artist's name is inaudible, but the speaker says,

'Don't tell me, sir! I say 'ee'll never do anything worth a rap; the beggar's got no 'eart, and if 'ee's got no 'eart in 'is bosom, 'ow can 'ee put it on to canvas?'

Now, Tarbox may be a *self*-educated man, but educated and refined he certainly is; and yet he has no more notion of the use of the letter H than the commonest cockney. The thing is incredible, but it is true; and a glorious confusion of ideas in this instance seems to have gone along with confusion of sound. He is the only instance of this peculiarity, either, in the room. More than once during the evening it will be heard in other quarters; and one is set wondering as much by it

as by the strange attire, unkempt hair and beards, and the rest of the artist affectations, vanities, and eccentricities.

What is it which renders men, who may be supposed to have achieved their greatness partly by the exercise of the faculty of observation, so singularly *un*-observant upon certain points? Highly-gifted, refined, law-abiding, amiable citizens, who would as lief think of flying as of outraging the decencies and moralities of society, it is astounding (all affectations apart), to find them, here and there, making one wince by their systematic neglect of scissors, soap, and H's!

Quite exceptional, however, be it understood, are these instances of obtuse perversity. The bulk of the company at this studio party, as in the best artistic society generally, is made up of sufficiently well-looking people to pass muster anywhere, whilst here and there stand out men as distinguished in their appearance as by what they have done, and can do, in art. There is Francis Blandwin, to wit. He is in the first rank of painters, if not at their head; he is also an accomplished scholar and linguist, and yet he is equally renowned for his refined gentlemanly bearing and suave and charming manners. There again is Felix Spandril, who runs him hard at all points, and who is one of the most accomplished gentlemen, as well as architects, of the day. Indeed, it would be hard to find a handsomer, finer, or more thorough fellow in a day's march or a night's ramble.

Finally, and beyond all too, there is Mark Wheeler;

and when he, with his tall figure, fine head, and frank, handsome, intellectually powerful countenance, is seen towering above his compeers, there is no question about the tone of this studio party; for as surely as he is preëminently striking to look upon, so is he preëminently remarkable as a painter. Many other men of note might be quoted, as all-sufficient, the curmudgeons notwithstanding, to redeem the brethren of the brush and their kindred from ever being mistaken for the common herd.

What wonder, then, that the oysters and Chablis, the beer and the sandwiches, slip down with a gusto enhanced by the tone of the company, and that later on, after cigars and pipes have been renewed, and music has, through the instrumentality and vocality of the rarely - gifted performers also present, 'soothed the savage breast' into a fit condition for sleep, the stroll homeward under the stars clenches the conviction that this studio party has been the best and jolliest upon record !

THE HAIR'S BREADTH.

THIS proverbial, figurative, and infinitesimal measurement, as applied in its every-day use to escapes, chances, luck, or good or evil fortune, opens so vast a field of speculation in connection with this mysterious life of ours, that there is ever a temptation to look back in wonderment upon events that, we say, have turned out so or so by 'a hair's breadth.' Thousands upon thousands of them, we can see, attained their existing results simply by that very delicate degree; but it is quite impossible to calculate how many of our most treasured and now successful schemes were upon the point of wreckage by an invisible hair's breadth, or how, on the other hand, some of our direst calamities were on the point of being escaped by the like 'capillary' interposition.

We know that out of Alfred Hennypeck just happening to meet his old acquaintance Cuthbert Crusher, whom he had not seen for three years, on that particular evening in January 1851, when they were both waiting for an omnibus at Charing-cross, sprang an intimacy which led to the matrimonial alliance between A. H. and Miss Crusher, which the former has never had cause to regret but once since. We know too

that had not that half-bred obscure foreigner, Monsieur Paul Parvenu, chanced to have taken up the *Times* at the moment he did in that dingy café in Leicester-square where he was wont to partake of his frugal dinner, and had his eye not fallen upon the advertisement headed 'next of kin,' which informed him that 'by applying,' &c. &c., 'on or before that day week, he would hear of something,' &c. &c., he would probably never have come into possession of the princely fortune to which it appears he was entitled, and which in the eyes of a discriminating world has made him the estimable and refined gentleman he is. It is also now quite apparent to us, far-seeing and sagacious as we are, that if Clavering Huntingdon, Esq., had not been thrown from his horse precisely opposite 'Storks Hall, Clapham-common,' and been carried for dead into that noble and hospitable mansion, he would never have married the gentle Selina Storks, and lived happily ever afterwards.

Equally obvious is it that if Bluster Babblecome, Esq., the great actor, after his successful tour through the United States, had not attempted to return to his native land by the ill-fated steamship Dictator, and by so doing have gone to the bottom with the large fortune he had amassed, his wife and children would now have been in affluent circumstances, instead of on the verge of the workhouse. We are aware that poor Babblecome travelled night and day for a week to catch that particular steamer, and that he caught it by 'a hair's breadth,' the precise space which lay between

him and his grave. By the same token also, it is recorded that Mellicott Mercier, the celebrated Manchester merchant, travelled for the same period indefatigably, for the same purpose; but, arriving in New York an hour too late, lost the steamer, and saved his life. Ruin appeared to stare him in the face from this miscarriage of his plans, but the 'hair's breadth' by which he missed the steamer left him the opportunity of recovering from his financial difficulties. The governing power thus swaying our fortunes—mighty, obscure, mysterious as it is—is, however, apparently balanced by this most delicate of weights, the weight of a hair. Incomprehensible to us, it nevertheless binds us eternally and irresistibly to certain courses, as surely and as firmly as if its chains were links of steel and iron, instead of the spider's web-like hair, upon the turning of which we see the fate of all of us depends. Drawn along by the slender thread, it would appear that we are sometimes no more capable of counteracting its tension on us than we are of flying to the moon.

But why attempt to enumerate such cases? Life is made up of them. They constitute our very existence; these are the terms upon which we hold possession of this fragile tenement of bone and muscle. Patent to everybody, they show upon how precarious a basis the whole fabric stands; but what is not so clearly shown is, by what especial hairs' breadths we have missed, are missing every moment of our lives, fatal catastrophe or illimitable fortune. Trivial and slight,

serious and important—ay, important even unto death—circumstances hourly happen, all turning this way or that by ‘a hair’s breadth.’ Fortunately we are not over-conscious of this state of things, or existence would be unbearable; but glimpses of it are now and then vouchsafed, just, as it would seem, often enough to remind us from time to time of the slender tenure of our days and the crumbling nature of the ground along which time is hurrying us. We may be quite conscious on occasions, and in a thousand obvious ways, by what a very little our efforts have resulted in failure or success; but we are blind to so many of our risks and to the escapes we have, that perhaps we do not often enough meditate on what is at the best quite inscrutable, and therefore do not value sufficiently the mercies which are vouchsafed to us. A great calamity befalls us, and we rebel before we take into consideration that the very state of things we are condemning has probably preserved us from a much worse one.

Should a perception of the danger we are exposed to from the tails of goods-trains, the imperfect fitting of points and switches, from the inattention of over-taxed pointsmen, breaksmen, signalmen, guards, or engine-drivers, constantly recur, we should shudder at the thought of ever entering a railway carriage. But for once that we chance to be looking out of the compartment in which we are bowling through *Mugby* Junction just in time to see our engine miss by a hair’s breadth the tail of the goods-train which is being shunted into a siding out of our way—for once that we do

s, we pass fifty times through that important station, which expresses never stop (and we always travel press), with our eyes gently closing in a comfortable ease, or fixed upon the evening paper, and so never know how frequently we are upon the verge of annihilation or life-long suffering. If we could see what we had every providential escape we have on our daily journeys from suburb to city—well, the dividends of railway companies might be less than they are, and would be by no means certain that the days of the stage-coach and the long stage-wagon would be ever gone.

If fate, or the doctrine of chance, should ordain that, three days in succession, the gentleman happening to be walking immediately in front of us on the pavement should tread on the loose iron plate of a coal-hole, slip in, and break his leg, the accident would so impress with the risks we run at every step, that our future comfortable progress through the London thoroughfares would be much interfered with; for we should concentrate our attention upon dodging every such pitfall, and our wobbling and meandering gait would draw down on us the incisive chaff of the street-boy; we should be accounted either mad or drunk.

Happily it is only now and again that we get a warning, and the hold it takes upon us is usually so transient, as never materially to interfere with our general conduct. It is not our lot to be on the spot at every misadventure which occurs on the pavement, and we only shrug our shoulders, and say when we see

the man break his leg perhaps once in our lives, 'By Jove! that might have happened to me; I might as well have trodden on the hole as he; I only missed it by a shave,' or 'by a hair's breadth.' But we forget the circumstance after a while, and go along on our business or pleasure with our usual jaunty air, taking no heed whatever of coal-hole or trap-door, and remaining in blissful ignorance of how often we miss by a hair's breadth actually or metaphorically 'putting our foot in it.'

We set our mind and heart on marrying Ross Munda, and we should have been a blighted being to the end of our life had we not carried out our purpose; but we perhaps shall never have a suspicion of what a touch-and-go affair it was, that getting her father's consent. We shall never have a suspicion that if we had let slip at that momentous interview the fact that our uncle by the mother's side formerly kept a baker's shop at Barking, the aristocratic and inexorable parent of our wife would at once and for ever have forbidden us the house. The pieces of orange-peel we unconsciously avoid treading on, and the tender toes of our friends which, by a merciful interposition, we equally avoid crushing, by a hair's breadth, we never can enumerate; but if it be any satisfaction to us, we may be quite sure that we are missing these catastrophes all day, and every day of our lives, and always by a hair's breadth. Our good genius alone was responsible for preserving us from entering into a malicious diatribe against the aggressive policy of Prussia, and of ex-

pressing our unqualified dislike for Germans generally, the other day, when we dined for the first time with our old college companion Barnabas Blunter. It was not due to our instinct even that we abstained from so eternally committing ourselves, and it was only by 'a hair's breadth' that we discovered, in time to stop our mouth, that Mrs. Blunter was of German birth, and closely related to the Grand Duke of Schwigemoff. The lady spoke English so admirably, in the few words we exchanged on being introduced, that we had no suspicion of the delicate ground we were about to tread upon, and therefore were saved from committing a gross breach of politeness and good taste by a hair's breadth. Had we never found out her nationality, we should never have known, as we now know, the escape we had; and utterly impossible must it be, therefore, for us to estimate how frequently, without knowing it, we are preserved under similar conditions from treading on our most esteemed friends' most tender corns. There are some people, less fortunate than ourselves, who are everlastingly getting into scrapes by 'a hair's breadth.' Another moment, and the words they utter would not have been uttered; they just manage by a hair's breadth to have the opportunity of saying the wrong thing, identically as we were prevented by a hair's breadth from saying it. They continue to display their antipathy, shall we say, to the Hebrew race, when in presence of some worthy retiring Israelite, or, by 'a hair's breadth,' a turn in the conversation—the turn of a hair, that is—frustrates their unintentional rudeness,

and likely enough they remain for ever unaware of how near they have been to damaging their character for good breeding ; and these are the escapes—the number of which we can never calculate—we all have more or less, according to what we call our good or bad luck.

Grateful indeed should we be that nature has not given us two pair of eyes, a set in the back as well as in the front of our heads ; for with such an abnormal amount of vision we should perpetually see by what a hair's breadth we escape death whenever we attempt to cross Regent-street in the afternoon during the month of May. Life in London would become a burden, if we always saw the glee with which the hansom cabmen charge at us the instant our foot leaves the kerb, and with what exultation they display their skill as go-whips by driving so close upon our heels as only to save themselves from committing manslaughter by a hair's breadth.

What a mercy it is, too, that we are not all doctors—that we do not perceive how we are everlastingly jeopardising our valuable lives by our imprudence or want of caution in eating and drinking, in dancing or riding, in jumping or running, in rowing or cricketing, in going up-stairs or down, in stooping or stretching, in coughing or sneezing, in cutting our corns, or blowing our noses !

Nevertheless, we may lay the flattering fact to heart if we please, that in all our natural ordinary every-day acts, simple or complex, the barrier between our present state of perfect health, and the possibility of paralysis,

apoplexy, tetanus, broken limbs, dislocations, strains, and all 'the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to,' is no wider than a hair's breadth. Whether that seat in the cab which we occupied in our drive home in the rain half an hour ago, had only been vacated five minutes before we got into the vehicle by some one sickening for, or just recovering from, scarlet fever, typhus, or smallpox, time alone will show; but if we find, in the course of a few days, that suspicious symptoms are beginning to manifest themselves, we have the consolation of knowing it was by the merest chance that we called that particular cab, and that we only missed that brand-new fresh-looking one, which came up the next instant, by a hair's breadth. Equally also may we console ourselves with the reflection that the loss of that secretaryship, worth a thousand a year, for which we were competing, was due entirely to our boot-lace breaking at the moment it did, and so causing us to arrive five minutes late at our appointment with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and just in time to hear that he had bestowed the post upon our bitterest enemy, Muddestone, simply because he was there, and we were not. We shall have the consolation of remembering all our lives that we missed that valuable situation only by a hair's breadth, and that only by that extent were our prospects marred for life. On the other hand, should this consideration fail to reconcile us to our ill-luck, we may at least call to our aid the philosophic recollection that had we obtained the berth we might, by an over-zealous attention to our duties, have

laid the foundation for softening of the brain, and so have been less well off on the whole than we are now with our miserable pittance of one hundred and fifty pounds per annum ; and then that hair's breadth of boot-lace, which we anathematised so cordially, presents itself to our imagination in the light of a stout rope, by which we for a while were suspended over a yawning precipice, and to the strength of which rope is due our present robust state of health.

If the fabric of social civil life, in all its relations of one item to another, thus appears to hang upon an infinitesimal quantity, how much more obvious does the system seem when applied to military matters. Once upon the ' tented field,' there literally is no possibility of calculating how vast may be the destinies which are swayed by the turning, that is by the breadth, of a hair. Look back to the French and Prussian war, where the tide of fortune set continuously in one direction, and it must still be admitted that, at one period, the security of the German army's position round Paris was menaced to an extent that will never be accurately known, but which escaped disturbance only by a hair's breadth. Had Metz held out a little longer, who can say what might not have been the chances which the army of the Loire would have had of raising the siege ? With regard to individual risks and escapes, there is no limit to the evidence of the influence which this remarkable little measurement has. One officer goes through a dozen actions ; bullets and shells fly about his head, and miss him by the

proverbial space; he has half a dozen horses killed under him, and never gets a scratch; whilst another falls with a bullet through his heart the moment he, for the first time, comes within range of the enemy's fire. Wounds escape being mortal, vital arteries and organs are passed by the deadly lead, quite actually and not figuratively at all, by a hair's breadth. It were endless to point to instances of

'most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field,
Of hair-breadth 'scapes i' th' imminent deadly breach;'

and the conditions of warfare, to a large extent, point out so clearly the risks to which they put human life, that the sensations of surprise at the turn events may take are somewhat dulled.

The glaring and obvious evils, miseries, and dangers of every-day life, however, are too constantly apparent to be entirely overlooked, and as in war, so in peace, we are in a measure prepared for them. They arise; we see them and evade them, 'by the skin of our teeth,' and are justly set wondering at our good luck; but we are not astonished under some circumstances to find ourselves 'coming to grief,' as the phrase goes, in spite of all experience, eyesight, caution, and forethought. The events, which startle us by their results, are those which are unforeseeable, which no amount of caution appears capable of preventing, but which nevertheless eventuate by a hair's breadth, and, amidst the mass of proverbial expressions in daily use, we can

hardly find one which teems with so much that is mysterious, and at the same time so literally applicable to the chances of existence, as this our text. Even as we lay down our pen, it occurs to us that this paper was within a hair's breadth of not being written—only by a hair's breadth was it suggested. As it comes to a conclusion, as we rise to vacate our chair, who can say what trivial act, at this moment quite un contemplated, may not bring us, with all the rest of our scribblings, plans, hopes, and ambitions, to within a hair's breadth of the end?

A MYSTERY OF THE CLIFFS.

HIS ACCOUNT OF IT.

‘WELL, there *is* a way down to it, sir. O, dear, yes; we often go and sit there in hot weather; it’s a nice breezy place, don’t you know? But unless you’re pretty steady in the head, it wouldn’t be exactly safe for you to try and get there. It’s a mere ledge of a path overhanging the Sheerdown Cliff; we thinks nothin’ of it, but gentlemen from London and the like aren’t altogether used to such places.’

‘And is there no other way down?’

‘No, sir; there’s a reg’lar wall of cliff above and below and at the end, and when you get to the end you are bound to come back over your own footsteps. No, sir; short of being a bird, there’s only one way of getting to “Booby’s Nook,” as we call it.’

‘Ah, I should like to try and have a look at the place close, notwithstanding. Will you show me the way? I’m not much of a climber, but I think my head will stand that. I have come down here to be quiet; it would be a good place to sit and read in, I should think, and one would not be much disturbed.’

‘O, dear, no; no one won’t bother you *there*, sir. I’ll show you the way willingly.’

The coastguardsman turned, and began to descend the smooth springy billow of turf, which terminated apparently with the edge of the cliff. Before I follow him, it will be as well for me here to say that the part of the dialogue which I have just set down, sounds the keynote of the marvel of my life—the one element in it which has shaped my destiny, and given me cause to acknowledge, beyond all men living perhaps, that there are indeed more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy. Asked to tell my tale, that it may be added to the numerous well-authenticated records of the ‘strange yet true,’ I dash into it at once, pointing out, as I have hinted, that it begins with some talk that I am having with a coastguardsman. He is on duty by the verge of a tall headland, far away upon our northern shores. I have wandered up there from a neighbouring fishing-village, whither I have come, as any other ordinary over-worked lawyer might have come, to stay for a little seaside quiet and relaxation during the Long Vacation.

With the most prosaic surroundings from my cradle to this thirtieth year of my life, I suddenly find myself plunged into the midst of an astounding romance—I, mind you, one of the most matter-of-fact commonplace fellows in the world, and one whose very occupation, as well as his natural disposition, leads him to take a hard, dry, and ultra-rationalistic view of everything. Yes, truly, in the beginning, it would have been impossible to find an educated man of ordinary capacity less capable of having his imagination worked upon, or less

susceptible to the influence of the marvellous or the supernatural, than myself.

This is all changed now, and the dawn of my conversion dates from the moment when that good-natured blue-jacket led me down to 'Booby's Nook.'

It was a queer place, described accurately by the man's few simple words. I need only add that from above it looked like a ledge or huge tuft of grassy earth and rock, jutting out from the smooth gray surface of the cliff, at the extreme point of the promontory, and say about twenty feet below the summit. It had attracted my attention from the first, and I had an odd fancy to get to it, and followed the man with some little sense of excitement; an unusual feeling with me, stimulated, I suppose, by the fine air and freedom of the downs.

As we approached by the descent of slippery turf, I began to find that it was an awkward place as well as a queer, and as the faint indications of the path which we followed narrowed to a mere plank's width, where it actually came to the cliff's face, I did not quite like it. Sheer up for twenty feet on the left, sheer down for sixty or thereabouts on the right, with the 'murmuring surge' chafing on the 'unnumbered idle pebbles' beneath. After a dozen steps the path widened again a little, and a ridge of turf for a foot or two on the seaward side made a faint imitation of a parapet, the entrance as it were to the ledge proper. Here a seat had been scooped out of the face of the cliff, and art and nature thus combined to make an easy armchair and footstool.

'Sit ye there, sir,' says the coastguardsman, stopping and turning round, for I was following him very cautiously, and not much relishing the dizzy look things had from that height. 'Sit ye there, sir; and cock your legs up on that bit of turf in the front of ye—it's the comfortablest armchair we've got hereabouts, indoor or out.'

I obeyed, and found the man's words true; it really was a charming place to sit in. He walked on to the extreme end of this excrescence, which was larger than I had thought it from above, and though I am no geologist, it was, I apprehend, formed by the edge of a protruding stratum of marly earth or clay, running horizontally through the rocky formation of the cliff. There were several lower tiers at intervals of the same-looking stuff, but none of these projected; for the very good reason that there were not, as in the upper one, jutting crags or natural supports to hold them up. The man playfully patted the wall-like barrier, which abruptly rose round 'Booby's Nook' on all sides, save towards the sea, and along the little path we had traversed. Then he turned, and sat down on another natural chair, at the farthest end from me, twenty feet off, saying,

'There, sir; you see there's the only way for a man without wings to get to this 'ere little private box; we've got it all to ourselves: and what's more, so long as you keeps your feet up on your footstool there, nobody can't intrude upon us!'

'True again,' I said to myself; 'I shall come and

sit here often; in fact, I shall stay here now. Quite safe?' I asked aloud; 'no chance of a landslide?'

'Humph, no; not at this season,' is the answer. 'After heavy rain in the winter, and when there has been a frost, and then a thaw, don't you know, maybe bits of it go, maybe all of it will some day; but we never thinks of those things much; besides, nobody comes down here, 'cept in summer.'

A delightful spot to dream in; but, then, I was not a dreamer. Nevertheless, sitting there, with the soft gray blue of autumn above and below, a calm sweet-scented air brushing one's cheek, the rippling wavelets plashing tenderly far down at one's feet, and an evening light gently blending all objects into a warm harmonious haze, I lapsed into a placid speculative phase of mind—the nearest approach to a daydream I had ever experienced. I took a book from my pocket, read a page without realising a word, and from dreaming fell to sleeping.

'Beg your pardon, sir; but would you just move your legs a minute, and let me pass? I must go up to the look-out again now—sorry to disturb you.'

'O, ah, yes; I see you can't get by.'

'All right, sir. You'll be able to find your way back when you've had enough of it; only if I were you I wouldn't stay too late, don't you know; it mightn't be so easy for ye to see the path—not but what the moon will be up by the time the sun is gone, and she'll make it pretty nigh as light as day with this weather.'

'O, I sha'n't stay very long—I can find my way back—much obliged.'

I had moved my legs to let the coastguardsman pass; and, as he returned to his post, I put my feet up again on the grassy footstool and resumed my dreaming, and, finally, my sleeping. I must have had a rare long nap this time, for twilight was settling down upon the scene when next I opened my eyes.

'A very agreeable afternoon; the best thing I could possibly have done. I shall often come here,' I complacently communed with myself, as I indulged in a lazy yawn. My still half-sleepy eyes wandered from sky to sea and sea to sky, and then towards the farthest seat in 'Booby's Nook.'

Why, who in Heaven's name was sitting there? Was I still dreaming, or was I losing my wits? A very curious sensation suddenly came over me for a moment—a cold deathlike sensation. I made an effort to rise, but seemed riveted to the seat, and could do nothing but stare like a helpless fool. At what? How could any one have come there without my knowing it—to this ridge, only accessible by the path across which my legs were still stretched? Yet, palpably, positively, there was some one. Yes, a young lady, dressed in ordinary watering-place costume—gray hat and feather, gray jacket and skirt to match. She was deliberately putting on her gloves, at least one glove, the left—the other was on. There was not much light in the sky truly, and I could not distinguish her features, for she had her profile towards me; but there she was—there

ould be no mistake about that, for there were not above twenty feet between us. But how—how, in the name of all that was wonderful, had she got there? Only through my body, it would seem, so to speak—for had I not to move my legs to let the coastguardsman pass when he went back to his post? Even he could not step over my knees, and certainly it was hardly likely a young lady would have attempted to do so, and quite impossible that she could have done it without awaking me. My feet were actually still up as I continued staring at her. Positively—there's no other word for it—I was stounded, awe-struck! I—remember—the matter-of-fact prosaic lawyer, who had never even been startled in his life!

I don't know how long I sat thus, but the light had all-nigh faded from the sky when I stood up and said loud, 'You will hardly be able to find your way back, fear, if you sit there much longer. This is a very dangerous path.'

No answer. I took one step towards her, and was again on the point of speaking, when she too rose, and without looking towards me, she waved her hand once twice, as if warning me back, and then resumed her little struggle with that obstinate glove. Her fingers and wrists continued to work nervously at it; and her face, as from the first, was bent intently upon it. Again spoke; again without getting any answer; but the warning gesture was repeated. Impossible to describe my sensations. I don't attempt it. If you like to think I was frightened, you must; perhaps I was; for, after

one more fruitless attempt to get her to speak, I turned my back upon her, and, I hardly know how, found myself, within a minute or two, close to the coastguard station on the top of the cliff.

I was explaining, describing, wondering, and suggesting; telling all about the young lady down in 'Booby's Nook.' Two or three of the men, amongst whom was my friend who had shown me the way, were listening, and, I could quite see, laughing at me in their sleeves.

'Well,' I said, 'you may believe me or not, as you please; but if I never move from this spot again, I'll swear that what I am telling you is true. She was sitting where you were sitting,' said I, turning to my friend, 'when we first went down, in the very seat.'

'Couldn't be sir; simply couldn't be,' answered the man. 'There hasn't been no lady like that seen about here the whole day. Lor' bless ye, they'd be frightened out of their lives to go there! I heerd one of our men say that a week ago there was a picnic party hereabouts, and one young lady declared she would sit down in "Booby's Nook;" but he said she didn't stay long, but came back quite dizzy and scared like at the height of the precipice, and wished she hadn't gone. Besides, as I was telling you, nobody couldn't get by, 'cept you moved your legs—leastwise, as I say, unless they was a bird.'

'Well, now, just come down, and look for yourselves,' I struck in, appealing to the whole group; 'of course she is there still—we must have seen her had she come away. Bring a lantern—no, we sha'n't want

a lantern, there's a moon ; that will make everything as bright as day in another five minutes. My good fellows, come and look for yourselves.'

Excitement is not the word which will express my state of mind ; for the disbelief I met with a little roused my temper, in addition to other feelings. We turned, and approached the beginning of the descent ; we neared the edge, and, as the sailors put it, were just opening the cliffs, upon which the moon was now playing brightly, when lo ! there was a heavy rumble, followed by a rushing sound like falling earth, and then a heavy thud or two. We all started, and pushing forward were just in time to see the last portions of 'Booby's Nook' sliding pell-mell down the face of the cliff—the whole projection on which I and the mysterious young lady had been sitting not five minutes before had disappeared, and lay in shapeless heaps upon the beach below.

'A narrow escape you've had, sir, anyways, young lady or not,' ejaculated the coastguardsman.

Round by a circuitous way, down to the foot of the cliffs, we went, a whole party of us, coastguardsmen, chief boatman, and two or three farm-labourers, all armed with picks and shovels. I insisted that it would be little short of murder to delay a search for the unfortunate girl—she was undoubtedly buried in the fallen heap. What obloquy I went through as the original disbelief in my story was strengthened with each unsuccessful clearance of the *débris*, no words can tell ; let it pass.

After the picking and shovelling, and spreading out of the masses of fallen earth, had gone on for a couple of hours, under the broad light of that full moon, and not a vestige of any young lady could be seen, further efforts were prevented by the incoming tide. The men latterly had grown sulky; the rough sarcastic humour with which they at first responded to my appeals gave way to a more open and a less agreeable display of their sentiments. They looked upon me as crazed, and it was only the curious and unexpected landslip which had ever given any weight to my story; *that* had seemed to be a sort of confirmation of it, it was so unlooked for.

Up came the bubbling, lapping tide, sluicing through and over the tumbled heaps of earth. The men were beating a retreat, and I, more mystified and bewildered than I had ever felt in my life, was following reluctantly at the tail of the gang. Dejected, and with eyes bent on the ground, I was just quitting the fringe of the *débris*, when they fell upon an object which instantly arrested me. With a stoop and a shout, I picked it up, waving it in my hand, and calling loudly to the men to return and behold the piece of confirmatory evidence I had secured. It was nothing more nor less than a glove, a lady's tiny left-hand glove—surely the identical one she had been struggling with.

The colour I had never seen, and of course could not now; but if it were not hers, whose else in such a place? In the mind of no reasoning being could there

be a doubt, yet no other sign of her or of anything belonging to her was ever found ; no, not so much as a ribbon or a handkerchief.

For a while the glove revived a slight belief in my story among the coast folks thereabouts ; it spread like wildfire, and at my earnest entreaties the search was renewed at every ebb of the tide, and a sharp watch kept for some days ; but resulting in nothing. Very soon the whole matter was set down as the offspring of my imagination. *My* imagination, forsooth ! ‘The gentleman’s got a craze like, don’t you know ? I make no doubt but what he’s kind o’ cracky, if one knew the rights of it.’

This was the verdict I overheard pronounced by my friend of the coastguard to a comrade one day a little later, when I was wandering and wondering near the scene of my mysterious adventure. And did I never get any nearer to the solution of the mystery ? We shall see. For years it seemed as if I never should ; but, as I still retained the glove, I thought that I saw in that just the ghost of a chance.

As the commonplace expression originally rose to my mind, I started. ‘The ghost of a chance.’ Ridiculous ! As if I of all men was likely to believe that I had seen a ghost. If it had not been for the glove though, I don’t know what I might not have believed. It was not the ghost of a glove, that was quite certain : for it had never been worn ; only a little stretched at the wrist ; and there the maker’s name was stamped, but so imperfectly as to be illegible ; the final letters

ry, the number (sixes), and the word 'Exeter' alone coming out clear.

Before I left the little inn where I was staying, I wrapped the glove up in a sheet of thick note-paper, on which I wrote the date and hour of the strange experience connected with it; and then putting the whole into an envelope, and sealing it with my signet ring, I took it with me when I returned to London, and locked it up carefully in my old bureau.

HER ACCOUNT OF IT.

HE asks me to finish his story for him. He declares that, as a dutiful wife, I am bound to do so, especially as he is so much occupied at that hateful office all day; whilst I have nothing to do. But then the thought of one incident in what has to be told makes me so sad, and revives such sorrowful memories, that I doubt if I shall be able to get through the task. Only by remembering that out of the girl's grief has grown the wife's happiness can I hope to succeed.

The winter assizes were on when we first met; and I do not deny that from the moment we were introduced at the ball I felt strangely influenced by him—pleasantly, yet somehow very sadly. I had had no experience then, yet I knew that love at first sight, as it is called, would not wholly explain my sensations; there were other agencies at work. I was quite conscious of this even then—later on how easily all was accounted for!

He followed up the acquaintance, was invited to our

house, spent several evenings there; both my parents liked him, and my father's business relations with him helped the intimacy, and soon it seemed as if we had known him all our lives.

When the summer assizes came round, we had gone to Torquay, my mother and I; for, despite all the associations of the place, it had a sad fascination for us both; thus the house was never given up, and we still went to it year by year. He came over from Exeter with my father more than once, for an hour or two during the week. His presence seemed perfectly natural, and could lead but to one result.

Our engagement was acknowledged and approved of, and amongst the little incidents connected with it came the one of my being photographed (a novelty in those days) standing, sitting, indoors, out of doors, with hat and without hat, every way. Some proofs were sent home on the eve of his going to London (the last time he would be going alone), and were brought to us as we were stepping out of the bay-window on to the lawn, just before setting off for a stroll along the cliffs. He took the packet from the servant, and slipped it into his pocket, saying, 'We will take them with us, and look at them whilst we are out; I can't afford to lose another moment of this beautiful evening. I have never yet had the chance of getting one walk by the sea.' He patted my cheek affectionately as we crossed the lawn, and went on gaily, 'You are going to marry one of the busiest men in England, I believe, little woman. What a lucky thing it is that

we understood each other so well from the first! I should never have had time for love-making after the usual fashion; and you, you never seemed to expect it!

'No, certainly,' I answered. 'I don't know what it was, but I quite felt you were in earnest, and that you cared for me—well, almost by the second time we met.'

'Destiny, my child; destiny or fate, or whatever you may please to call it. You must have had a strange influence over me, because I had not exchanged half-a-dozen words with you when I felt it was to be. Here is my fate, I said to myself; I'm certain of it. And what is more, I never looked upon you in the light of a stranger. When we were talking at that ball, it was to me just as if we had known each other for years.'

'Exactly my own case,' said I; 'and when you came to our house the next day, I knew we should be married; something told me so.'

'Yes, dear child, natural affinity; no doubt there is such a thing. Some people are drawn towards each other, others are repelled by each other; the mere tendency we have to like or dislike people, directly we are introduced, is only the beginning of the same feeling in its lowest form. You may call it what you please—animal magnetism, odic force, psychic force, or any other scientific name; it doesn't matter—it exists.'

Then he went on, more slowly, 'I did not always think so, though indeed I never thought about it until I knew you; but the way we two have got on together

convinces me that there is an intangible power which constantly influences our actions, and—who knows?—perhaps even guides our footsteps towards those for whom we have an affinity.’ He was echoing my own thoughts and opinions ; undoubtedly we had been drawn together, and I said so. Our courtship had been of the very simplest ; we had not met a dozen times in all ; even now, owing to the extreme pressure of his business, all his visits were flying ones ; but the most perfect confidence had grown up between us, and without any sentimentality I may say that we were irresistibly assured of each other’s love.

After a short silence, he continued, as we walked along, rather thinking aloud, as it seemed, than speaking : ‘ Yes (who can tell ?), may it not be that when the two right people are brought together, they have been travelling as it were towards each other from their birth ; that the affinities have been remotely at work attracting each to each ; and that throughout the vast universe of the unseen all kindred souls are on their way to join one another—everywhere striving to assimilate, and, once meeting, *do* assimilate inevitably in perfect concord, understanding each other, becoming part of each other at once, as you and I have done ? It must be so ; and possibly when the two right people don’t meet, it is only because material and worldly barriers intervene—hence the unhappiness and the *mésalliances*. If the spirit alone had sway, as it will hereafter, then things and people would fall into their right places, and our earth become a heaven. But this is too specu-

lative for you, little woman, and for me too, considering the matter-of-fact fellow I am, though I fancy I am much less so than I used to be. Let us sit here.'

By this time we had reached the extreme limit of our walk, a cliff-path towards Babbicombe Bay; the sun was just setting, and the whole landscape was bathed in the most lovely light.

We sat down close to the edge of the cliff, and the place, the hour, and the circumstances combined to put more sentiment perhaps into our conversation than we had ever indulged in before. Now and then he rattled on gaily enough, but ever and again he relapsed into a graver vein.

'It is all very well,' he said, 'to laugh at what is called a woman's reason when they say "they like a thing because they like it;" but, for my part, I believe they are often influenced by a subtle perceptive faculty, which again is nothing more than an expression of that same force we were talking of, magnetic or otherwise, and is therefore their most trusty guide. In nine cases out of ten they are right, and this instinct (if we may call it so) guides them more truly than all the logical reasoning in the world would. As an example—look at me. There is no reason or logic in your preference for me; yet of course you are quite right.'

Then we both laughed, but soon lapsed into a silence which was not, however, without its eloquence. At last he said, 'A little leisure is very pleasant; it's so long since I tasted it, I had almost forgotten its flavour. I have not spent such an idle day as this has been for

nearly three years ; not since—' he paused, and an expression quite strange to his face came over it. 'It is very wonderful,' he went on after a minute, 'how this scene, and weather too, reminds me—it is not altogether unlike that place : high cliffs and sea and evening light.'

'What place?' I asked.

'O,' he answered abruptly, and with a return of his gayer mood, 'a little place up in the north, where I spent a short holiday once ; but never mind that. By the way, where are those photographs ? We have not looked at them yet ; I wonder how they have come out.'

He searched for them, and untied the packet. I could not well get much closer to him than I was already, but still it was necessary that I should be very close indeed in order to examine the pictures, he *would* hold them so stupidly. Some were good, some were bad, some passable, very nice, and so on. Who does not know the sort of chatter that goes on in such a case ?

We had gone through all the photographs but three, the last at the bottom of the packet, which he had been holding like a pack of cards. In the first of these three I was in a garden dress and jacket, holding my hat in my hand. 'That's the best,' he said ; 'it is the same dress you have on now, isn't it ?'

'Yes, I thought it would do for this quiet walk ; it is my favourite gray.'

'Ah,' he continued, 'I notice you are very fond of gray, dear little Quaker-woman.'

He turned to the next picture, and I thought I felt

him give a slight start. It showed me, as in the last, standing out of doors, with a flat background of imitation rock; only I had my hat on, and was standing more sideways. He made no remark.

Only one photograph was left. We bent over it at the same moment, and then—there was no doubt—he started as if he had been electrified. I looked up in his face; he was deadly pale, and that same strange expression which I have just referred to when he was speaking of his last holiday was upon it.

‘What on earth is the matter?’ For a second he made no answer, but continued to glare—there is no other word for it—at the picture. I repeated the question earnestly, ‘What—what is the matter?’

‘Very wonderful, very wonderful indeed,’ he said slowly, without noticing me. Then, turning round suddenly, he added, ‘Dear child, just go and sit like that over there, against that rock there; sit in this same attitude, and let me look at you.’

‘But, please,’ I began to entreat, ‘do tell me what—’

‘No, no,’ he broke in sharply; ‘do as I tell you, just for a minute; let me be convinced; mind, as nearly as you can, in this precise attitude.’

I did as he wished; that is, I went to a mass of rock at the end of the walk, a little distance off, and sat down in the position shown by the photograph he held in his hand, the position in which I had last been taken, a sitting profile view, in hat and jacket as before, and in the act of pulling on my left-hand glove.

You who have read the beginning of this story will easily guess what was now to follow. Of course he thought he recognised in my portrait and in me, as I sat for it, the semblance of the girl whom he had seen upon that northern headland. But I, I who was still in the dark, what could I think of his behaviour? Until the explanation came, sore indeed was my perplexity, my amazement, but it did not last long.

After gazing for a minute or two alternately at me and the photograph, as if comparing them, his face terribly pale, and his whole manner extremely agitated, he rose, walked straight up to me, and taking the hand I anxiously extended towards him, he said, 'Tell me, child, were you ever at Dryley, a little fishing-village on the Yorkshire coast, between Scarborough and Whitby?'

'Never,' I answered.

'Never!' he repeated. Then suddenly falling into his musing tone again for a moment, 'Do you mean to say you were not there three years ago? that you were not there on the 29th of August 1858?'

It was then that I felt as if I had been stabbed, so unexpected, so utterly unlooked for was the utterance of *that* date of *all* others by *his* lips. For him to thrust it upon my recollection at such a time, so suddenly and recklessly, as it seemed to me, what did it mean? What could he know of anything that had happened on the 29th of August 1858? We had never spoken of it to him, neither my father, mother, nor myself; we spoke of it now to no one. It was too

sacred a day for us lightly to think of even. But that I felt and knew how strong, and beyond all power to disturb, his love for me was, I should have been wounded past telling. As it was, after the first shock his words gave me was over, I divined in an instant that there was some strange mystery at the bottom of it, and I implored him to explain, to tell me why he asked the question, and what connection *that* date could have with him.


Then he sat down beside me, and began the relation of what he has written, but in a far graver and more thoughtful tone; for the matter was then strong upon him, and he felt its import keenly, whilst nowadays he takes a far lighter and more philosophic view of it all; and I too, though not the less impressed by its strangeness, have come to regard it, as I write, of course more calmly and rationally, and also as a coincidence; strange, of course—coincidences are always so, more or less.

Breathless and agitated, I listened to what he said; but before he had quite finished, I was obliged, impelled by an irresistible impulse, to tell him what we had hitherto never spoken of to him, and what was shaping itself out of it in my mind as he went on.

'O, wait, wait!' I cried. 'I have something I must tell you, now at once, more wonderful still, for it seems to be part and parcel of what you are relating to me. We never speak of her because it was all so sad, so dreadful; but I had a sister, a twin sister, so like me in all things—face, height, figure, thought, and

soul—that you could hardly tell us apart. She was my darling, my life, my second self—nay, she *was* myself as much as I am now myself. We hardly ever were apart, never did anything singly, and had not, since we could remember, ever been separated, even for a day, more than twice in our lives. Ah, me, to think that it ever *was* twice! But towards the end of August 1858—three years next month—we were invited to pay a week's visit to an old friend of ours, living at Brixham yonder. But I was not well, and it was thought better that I should not go; she went, however, and I never saw her alive again. It appears she set off one afternoon (the 29th of August), whilst on this visit, to walk up to Berry Head—that high land you see over there in the distance—and all we know after that is from a man who was at work in a field not far from the cliff-edge.


‘He said that between six and seven he saw her walking hastily, but absently, along the path; her face bent intently on the ground, or perhaps on the glove she seemed trying to put on. He merely glanced at her as she passed; but looking up from his work again almost immediately, he missed her; and yet the path along which she was passing lay straight open to his view for a long way on, much farther than she could have reached in the time. He thought this strange, and says the idea struck him that something must have happened to her. He wondered where she could be, and so left his work for a minute, and walked a little way on to where the path forked. Here one por-



tion of it ran dangerously close to the cliff-edge, and was hardly ever used on that account. He looked over, then he turned, and ran to the nearest house for help, for he had seen her lying a hundred feet below upon the beach.'

The thought of all that followed made it very difficult for me to speak about it then, and certainly there is no need to write about it now. The anguish and the sorrow we endured caused us never to mention it, except amongst ourselves, and then only with bated breath. So I do not know how long it might have been ere he would have been told of the fatal accident that befell her, had it not been for this strange coincidence of dates.

Sitting there, in the summer evening, with the quiet and the beauty that surrounded us, hand locked in hand and our hearts one, how could we fail to be impressed and awe-struck—how fail to feel that it was something beyond mere chance which had brought us together! Had we not before us evidence of that very going forth of spirit to meet spirit of which he had but lately been speaking? Could it be doubted that that second self, that very part of *myself* once released from its mortal bonds, had upon the instant flown towards him, and, by its mere presence in his mind, had served to warn him of danger, and caused him to move away from the treacherous seat in the cliff? where, had he remained but a few minutes more, certain death would have overtaken him, and I for ever have been deprived of the consolation of his love.



By and by, seeing all this so clearly, we began to talk calmly and more deliberately about it, and every detail which we compared tended to strengthen our conviction : to wit, the dress she wore, the counterpart of this I had on, and what had always been our simple country taste and preference, was identical with that in which she had come before his mental vision.

'Yet,' said I, 'it was but spirit after all, an image born of your brain, impalpable, invisible really, except *there* ; your actual eye never rested on her real form—that lay at that very moment hundreds of miles away, inert and cruelly crushed, almost past recognition ; the hour when she was killed, between six and seven, corresponding exactly as it does, leaves no doubt of that.'

'Ah, dear child,' he said, 'I should agree with you of course ; my matter-of-fact nature would not hesitate for a moment on such a point were it not that I hold a piece of positive, palpable, material evidence that what I saw was something more than a mere phantom of the mind, though how to account for it is beyond me.'

Then he told me of the glove, of which, in his excitement, he had said nothing hitherto. I confess that this indeed made me waver.

'And you have it still ?' I asked.

'Certainly, though I have never looked at it since the hour I sealed it up at Dryley. I come across the packet containing it constantly in my desk ; it is there safe enough, you shall see it for yourself ; we will break the seal together and read the date, which I wrote down at the time so that there could be no mistake.'

'A gray kid glove, you say, of number six size, with the word "Exeter" stamped inside? The size we wore assuredly, and the place at which, of course, we always bought our gloves.'

'Yes,' he answered, 'the left-hand glove.'

Suddenly now it flashed upon me. When her poor body was brought home, she had on but one glove—that on the right hand; the left was missing, and never was found.

We were married within a fortnight from the date of this conversation. He took me straight home to the house in London which he had prepared. Our honeymoon proper was to be kept in the Long Vacation—the busy man of law could snatch no earlier leisure—but *then* we were to go to the Yorkshire coast, and see the place where 'Booby's Nook' had once been nestling in mid-air. Yes; and we would take the glove with us, and compare and think about it, and try to get nearer to a solution of the mystery.

But the glove? The third evening we were at home he unlocked the old bureau—I was by his side, need I say it?—and there, in a top drawer, we found a bulgy envelope, sealed with his crest, and indorsed 'Dryley.'

'Ay, but I wrote the date and hour also,' he said, 'on the piece of paper inside, in which I wrapped the glove. You shall see.'

He broke the seal, and brought forth a sheet of thick writing-paper (the ominous date and hour written upon it in his own hand), with something soft inside it; and

indeed, before us, there lay a small left-hand kid glove, pale gray in colour, No. 6 in size, and the word 'Exeter' stamped inside.

Who can describe the mingled feelings struggling for utterance in each of our hearts? O, how vividly my old grief lived again for the first few moments that I held the glove—touched it with my fingers and put it to my lips! Had she once held this very glove?—was it possible? Bah! no.

In an instant there flashed through my mind a solution of this item of the mystery; this part of it was at least coincidence, nothing more.

I looked at my husband; he was greatly moved. At last he glanced up at me and said,

'Sceptical still, my wife? with such a proof as that before you? This is her glove; she was suffered to appear to me—for what purpose you best know. If not—why, all life's a dream, and there are no such things as facts.'

'Good lawyer that you are, dear,' I answered, 'I shall outwit you. You have overlooked a weighty piece of evidence. Do you not remember that the coast-guard'sman spoke of a picnic on that headland, and of a young lady going and sitting in "Booby's Nook"? This glove was hers, and never belonged to my darling. Now I look at it again it is not our colour quite; other people buy gloves at Exeter, other people wear "sises;" and though it is wonderfully strange that such a thing should have been dropped in such a place, for you to

find at such a pass, still coincidence *will* account for it—it must, it does.'

He rose, walked up and down the room for a minute or two; then stopping in front of me, with a very comical expression on his face, said,

'It is clear, then, that you think me a "booby,"—the veritable Booby of the Nook?'

'No, dear,' I answered, 'for enough has happened to justify our wonder, and make us doubt whether what some of us in our blindness call "chance" is not often part of the great system which regulates our lives. Others who have experienced marvels equal to these believe that it is. Whether wrought out by mere coincidence (as we see part of what has happened in our case has been), or whether by what is called "spiritual agency," they believe, as you admit and believe, that throughout the vast mysterious universe spirits that are akin are for ever struggling to meet. Then, once within the spell that hallows such a meeting, who shall say what may not be felt, or what tricks the imagination may not play us, cumbered as it is here with the weight of material things? If it was but chance that brought us together, you at least saw the ghost of it, and by the ghost of it were saved.'

He accepted my interpretation; and now I have done his bidding and finished his story.

That *our* spirits were akin, whether or not they were drawn together in the way described, is proved by the years of happiness we have passed since the day when our hands were joined and our hearts became as one.

A SAUNTER ON THE SOUTH DOWNS.

‘The lofty curves of the chalk downs, grand steadfast forms,
played over by the changing days.’ *Daniel Deronda.*

EVEN had I not been a Londoner, I think the South Downs would always have exercised an immense fascination over me; but as it is, having been born well within the sound of Bow Bells, they seem to form the nearest approach to what may be called my native mountains. No other country within an hour and a half's railway run from the metropolis ever inspires me with the same complete sense of change and freedom. None has any equally distinctive character, or can be compared as suggesting the open solitude and wildness of a mountainous district. One hears ‘the Downs’ commonly called barren and uninteresting; but this can only be the opinion of people who have a very indifferent care and limited love for natural beauties, and whose only notion of rural scenery is summed up in the words ‘green fields.’ The contemptuous way in which ‘Downland’ is spoken of by these folk, because there are no trees nor any water, proves that they are blind to most country attractions, except such as usually accompany a trip to Richmond or Hampton Court, and which are to be found concentrated at the

Star and Garter, or any like hostelry. But given a true love for Nature in all her broad and varied phases—and surely here we have her in a very especial and lovable one—and I cannot understand how anybody with an average strength of wind and limb can fail to enjoy a ramble over the undulating sweeps and hollows which are known as the South Downs. Given, too, but a fairly active imagination, and it is not difficult to fancy, as I have hinted, that we are wandering at least on the skirts of a mountainous region.

I know not if this affection of mine for these 'grand steadfast forms,' as George Eliot calls them, had not its birth in those Brighton schooldays, when one contrived surreptitiously at times to follow on foot the mild evolutions of the Brighton harriers. Any way the love has lasted. Notwithstanding the fact that since then the plough has made tremendous inroads upon the springy turf, and turned into dusty, chalky, flinty ruts many a hitherto boundless sweep of smooth and slippery grass, whilst bricks and mortar have encroached from the outskirts of all the towns and villages abutting upon the Downs, there is yet to be found sufficient of solitude, of precipitous ascent, broken form, high ridge, bold shoulder, secluded valley, lofty summit, and extensive view, to preserve the 'native mountain' notion. Exaggeration, when applied to this purpose of mine, of turning these molehills into mountains, is peculiarly edifying. Why should it be denied to a Londoner more than to a Scotchman to 'puff up his own hills'? They are the best he has near at hand; and he should

be accounted lucky if he be able to create for himself out of such simple materials the joy which a Highlander feels in tramping over his favourite heather.

Let any sturdy Southron, who is denied the opportunity of enjoying the real article in the North, see if he cannot find a fair substitute in the South. Let him come with me, to begin with, say to the coast-line of the Downs in the neighbourhood of Eastbourne. He has but to give the spur to his imagination, and he will find a succession of details answering to much that environs 'the heaven-kissing' hills. There is the flat and marshy plain, with a populous and busy town upon the water's edge ; as we leave it by a pretty suburb, there is the gradually ascending road, winding beneath lofty elms and amidst bosky hedgerows. If it be the right season, there will be waving wheat and barley rustling pleasantly in the opener places, and everywhere through the gaps and vistas of the arching avenue are to be had peeps of what we leave below—the plain, the town, the sea. Steeper and steeper grows the hill and scantier the foliage, whilst the silence and solitude increase, notwithstanding the occasional roadside cottage or lodge to country house. Soon the cluster of village thatch and whitewash on the plateau, already some hundred feet above the level of the sea, brings the first stage of our mimic mountain travel to a close.

Traverse the little straggling street, with its trim garden-patches decked here and there by a solitary wind-worn walnut-tree or holly-bush, sheltering a bench

or rustic arbour. Be not too curious as to the architecture of the few modern improvements, but pass on to the next ascent, and by the time it is fairly begun the whole character of the country will have changed. The road narrows, and shows how heavy rains turn into miniature torrent-beds the cart-ruts on the chalky soil. Trees have given place to gorse-bushes, and the first spurs of the open Downs rise green and smooth before us. More cornfields at first skirt the way on either side; steep banks bulge out at various points, whilst tempting footpaths straight across them offer shorter cuts. By degrees the ever-increasing steepness is overcome, the barley is replaced by the clover and the just peeping-up turnip and mangold; the cart-road has become a track, and the track a sheep-path, which, finally lost amidst clumps of bramble and gorse, lands you upon the untilled verdure itself, fresh, springy, and yielding—a mingled essence of sweet odours of wild thyme, clover, and sheep-browsed grass. Once here, you will admit, whilst pausing to take breath, that you have a fair make-believe of mountain-side, in scent, in exercise, and in extent of view. Here is the best substitute for the heather that I know of. Southward, moreover, you have the additional element of ocean, to lend another and surely not altogether an undesirable feature to the scene; and if we bend our steps towards the seaward limit of our mountain-range, there come into sight the bold headlands and curving shingly shore, with the surf-fringe lapping gently or breaking greedily upon the rocky bulwarks, as if to verify Hugh Miller's

imagery, when he described the sea as 'a great blue dragon, whose mission it was to devour the land.' From the tall summit of Beachy Head, with its sheer-down face of chalk, it is hardly possible to imagine a finer aspect of the 'wide, wide world;' we have it there in grandeur sufficient, surely, to satisfy a Londoner fresh from Fleet-street or the Strand. It may not be as boundless, really, as an outlook from the Irish western coast, nor will there be in calm weather the same peculiar heaving motion visible; but, since the eye finds no opposite coast to break the straight horizon, the notion of an Atlantic seaboard may as readily be conjured up as the mountainous idea; for never be it forgotten we are making the best and the most of what is within two hours of prosaic London.

Fling yourself down, then, at a spot like this, upon the soft turf by the cliff-edge; rest and drink in all that your quickened senses will absorb—the sights, the smells, the sounds; regard the emerald, purple, and azure-streaked waters, flecked with white-crested wavelets, and dotted in the distance by the sea-going sails of the Channel traffic; sniff up the briny ozone-laden air, mingling with that aforesaid odour of wild thyme, turf, and clover; listen to its songing up the cliff-face and across the grass; to the chopping caws of the choughs and crows that 'wing the midway air,' and to the lapping ripple of 'the murmuring surge that on the unnumbered idle pebbles chafes.' And—if you be not imaginative, you are not for my company—think that, at least in all these respects, the place must be much

the same as when the Saxon outposts first sighted the approaching warrior-crowded ships of the Norman Conqueror, or, for the matter of that, as when the ancient Britons first beheld the on-coming triremes and galleys of the colonising Cæsar !

‘Grand steadfast forms,’ such as these Downs on which we rest, remain unchanged, however ‘changeeful the days that play over them.’

Having drunk our fill of the glories yielded by the coast-line, turn we now again inland ; and if it be too long a tramp at once to reach the great northern spurs and boundary of the region, we will again flit on the wings of imagination thitherward ; and dipping like the indigenous sparrow-hawk into some of the lonely cups and hollows, or swooping across the billowing ridges, or poising stationary for a while, high in mid-air, like a darkened star, take in at a glance a few more of the features-peculiar to, and unique in, Downland.

The solitary farmsteads are prominent amongst these. Lichen and weather-toned old piles of red brick, tile, and slate, they nestle away snugly, unsuspected, in many a remote valley. Sparsely surrounded, perhaps, by a few tall elms and untended evergreen hedgerows, the ordinary stranger has no suspicion of their existence until he plumps upon them suddenly from some point of vantage. He will never have guessed that yonder narrow, winding, little-used road is the highway to a small colony, almost as complete and self-sustaining as if it were in the Australian bush ; yet so it is ; and its denizens must traverse many a

hilly mile ere the semblance of a town or village or even another habitation can be reached. Sometimes three or four farms are clustered near together in such a spot, and a little gray, ancient, square-towered church peeps up hard by, as unexpectedly as all the rest. This group of habitations will boast of a name ending assuredly in 'dene,' 'don,' or 'hurst,' and, seeing that there is an old-fashioned parsonage, a few scattered labourers' cottages, a tiny shop and a post-office, is called a village. There too will be seen big barns, with bulging portals, thatched ample ricks, lifted a foot or two from the ground, on queer pyramidal dwarf stone columns, making them look like giants' footstools, everything speaking of plenty and high-class agriculture. Stabling too there will be for the huge plough and wagon horses or, may be, mild-eyed oxen, since this last-named beast of burden is yet to be found tugging and toiling, surely if slowly, in the more secluded parts of the Sussex Downs. Of course there are straw-yards, piggeries, and poultry-houses, and all the surroundings of farm-life; not forgetting the pond and the queer old draw-well or two, with battered primitive wooden shelters, buckets, and windlasses. An escape from this secluded retreat will, at the easiest, demand a climb requiring sound wind and limb; and if we take a straight cut up the overhanging steep of grass, bordered by a ragged stunted fringe of pine and beech copse, we shall be in no danger of forgetting our mountain simile.

So, as Charles Kingsley has written, we go on : 'Up into the hills, past white crumbling chalk-pits, fringed with feathered juniper and tottering ashes ; up between steep ridges of turf, crested with black fir-wood and silver birch ; up into the labyrinthine bosom of the hills.'

Upon the heights once more, we shall espy, sooner or later, another prominent characteristic of the South Downs, and one again in perfect accord with the leading idea of which I write ; for what figure so appropriate for a mountain landscape as the shepherd leaning motionless on his crook, or lying beneath a sheltering cluster of gorse in patient guardianship of his fleecy flock ? Yes, of a certainty there he will be, in gray gabardine, slouched hat, and brown-leather leggings, with his wallet by his side, watching, in company with his faithful and sagacious dog, the long straggling line of 'silly sheep,' those far-famed 'muttons' which bear the name of the country where they are bred and fed. He, like the hills amidst which, from the cradle to the grave, his life is spent, knows no change ; very much what he was a thousand years ago, with some few allowances for the advance of civilisation, or rather, an altered civilisation, he remains to this day. His calling is one unsubjected to mutation—the tending and breeding of sheep in open hilly countries cannot be done by machinery, or reduced to an exacter science than it was by our forefathers. Improved arrangements in some details, perhaps, may have crept in ;

but they do not and cannot materially affect the life and aspect of the man whose business it is to stand sentry over the gentle browsing droves upon a wild hill pasturage.

The English shepherd generally—certainly he of the South Downs—is almost unique, resembling in no-wise, save in name, the herdsman of other countries. These are all, more or less, brought into contact at times with the outer world. The Scotch shepherd's or drover's life is full of travel and incident; the Swiss herdsman has, as it were, to be perpetually on the defence against the stupendous forces of Nature—the hurricane, the avalanche, the snow-drift, the torrent. He who tends sheep in the wilds of the Antipodes, or on the prairies of the American continent, is usually their owner; they are his wealth and substance, and he must be prepared to do, and often does, battle for his own life and theirs, as he drives his enormous flocks over leagues of pathless waste, mounted and armed to the teeth. The Oriental shepherd is still, even as we know him in biblical records, frequently a warrior, potentate, chieftain, and leader of his tribe. But yonder weather-beaten elderly man, whom we see in our rambles over the Downs, is a being entirely apart from all these: he has probably never, even in these days of railroads, gone twenty miles from that village in the hollow where he was born. 'Wars, and rumours of wars,' affect not him more than they did his ancestors; they touch not his occupation, for, if that be not peace-

ful, it is nothing, it is gone. For the greater part of his time, he may sit, as Shakespeare says, and

‘Carve out dials quaintly, point by point;
Thereby to see the minutes how they run;’

and he may say,

‘When this is known, then to divide the times:
So many hours must I tend my flock;
So many hours must I take my rest;
So many hours must I contemplate;
So many hours must I sport myself!’

Little enough forsooth, however, can be his sport. Beyond the trapping of a few dozen wheatears with springes set in the turf, between the middle of July and end of August, the search for plover's eggs in the spring, the marking of the hare in her form, or the mole and rabbit in their burrows, his *délassements* do not go; yet he is content to spend his days in that narrow world, which, arched by the gray English sky, is bounded southward by the straight horizon of the sea, and east, west, and north by rolling Downs.

And the farther we get to the north the more rolling and precipitous they become, until at length, pausing on their frontier, at such grand elevations as the ‘Devil's Dyke,’ ‘Chanctonbury Ring,’ ‘Newmarket Hill,’ or ‘Telscombe Tye,’ and looking down and out upon the broad weald of Sussex, we must admit, however prosaic our mood, that these are like mountain crests.

The cockneyfication of the region by excursionists

Even at the Devil's Dyke cannot destroy the extent of the view from this point; it is the precipitance of that sheer-down green leading the hollow which gives the title to the spot cannot detract from the romantic picturesque upon the roofs of the houses and square-tower of the village of Poynings beneath, upon the downs, the copses, woods, broad pasturages, and winding roads descending over the shoulders of the hills until they are gradually lost amidst the more level and more level landscape.

Abouts, and at intervals all along the boundary of geological transformation, narrow valleys open to the plain from the bosom of the hills, with a character in their formation amply to entitle me (my mimic dealing with the subject) to the name of 'passes.' And in the old coaching days the danger of them by night, in winter and rough weather, was attended, if not by danger, at least by the necessity for great care that harness, skid, and lamps were in good working order. Thus I have my 'St. Bernard' and my 'Simplon,' my 'Splügen' and 'Cenis,' a similitude to which I do not allow to be detracted from by the piercing of a railway tunnel here and there through the chalk, whilst the great circular ponds in various high places, a solitary windmill or two, and a solitary hut, do duty, within a run of an hour and a half from London, for St. Bernard's gloomy lake and ice.

Nor are my mountains devoid of legend and romance.

Many dark deeds committed amid their solitudes invest certain localities with a weird interest, and help to inspire one with something like that sense of awe and superstition from which no true mountaineer can ever quite escape. The ghost of poor Mr. Griffith, the Brighton brewer, who, on a night in February 1849, was robbed and murdered at a spot by the foot of one of the spurs of the big hills, ominously known as the 'Deadways Field,' starts up whenever the neighbourhood of Dale Gate and New Timber is revisited. These places, lying at the entrance to that one of my South Down passes running from Horsham and Henfield into the London road to Brighton, always conjure up in my mind the vision of the unfortunate gentleman returning home in his gig along the lonely road laden with the customers' moneys that he had collected. I hear him wishing a cheery 'good-night' to the man at the turnpike, and then a mile farther on I behold his lifeless body by the roadside, shot through the heart, his garments torn and besmirched, his pockets rifled, and, scattered by the way, his broken whip and unloaded pistol, a crape mask, part of the severed reins, and a clasp-knife; with his horse and gig turned round; and I remember how, before this fatal journey, an anonymous letter of warning had been sent to the poor brewer's clerk, the usual travelling collector, and how Mr. Griffith made the round himself rather than place the life of his servant in peril; how 300*l.* reward was offered for the discovery of the murderers; and how, from that day to this, no light has ever been let in upon the mystery.

Some cross-roads near a place known as the 'Spittal Barn,' hard by Lewes, bear an unenviable renown as having been the scene of the interment of a poisoner named Brinkhurst, who, having made away with his bosom-friend Moor by means of arsenic, at the aforesaid county town, finally poisoned himself in court when on his trial. He had confessed his crime, and was being shown some powder that he might identify it as resembling that which he had used upon his victim, when he seized the packet, and, before he could be stopped, swallowed the contents then and there, dying in frightful agony soon after. Though this occurred in the seventeenth century, the memory of it is revived whenever a descent from the high Downs by which it is surrounded is made upon the queer old-fashioned town.

Thus the range of the South Downs comes in for its share of tragic associations, whilst westward, towards Chichester, Midhurst, and Portsmouth, the elder amongst the natives will call your attention to many a lonely knoll or junction of cross-roads, where the detected amongst the highwaymen and smugglers who, in former days, infested this seaboard and the king's highway generally, expiated their crimes upon the gibbet, and hung rotting in chains for years—ghastly finger-posts pointing out, albeit with doubtful results, the way not to travel.

It is not so many years since such spectacles could be seen as to exclude them from our memory whilst enjoying the solitudes of the Downs, nor is it possible

to deprive such names as the 'Whiteways,' the 'Long Furlong,' or the already-mentioned 'Deadways Field' of a certain weird significance.

It is, however, the Downs in their simple beauty, the breezy freshness of their bracing air, and the splendid outlook from their crests that I am chiefly concerned with, and to which I point as their great attraction.

'Those mighty Downs,' once more to quote Charles Kingsley, 'with their enormous sheets of spotless turf, where the dizzy eyes lose all standard of size and distance before the awful simplicity, the delicate vastness of those grand curves and swells.'

The Alps have been called 'the playground of Europe;' let me call the South Downs 'the playground of London;' for nowhere within easy reach can the athletic Londoner find a fairer field for a stretch of wind and limb.

Almost at any season when a 'country outing' is possible, they are available for a brief holiday; and it is hard to say whether they show to greater advantage when clad with the winter's snow or the summer's verdure.

The cloud and sunshine chasing each other across the bright smooth turf under the July sky scarcely reveal the beauties of billowing ridge and hollowing cup more effectively than will the vast white sheet which sometimes lies unfolded beneath the leaden gray of December weather.

‘MY MURDER.’

A Confession.

I.


THOUGH I am willing to record fully how and why I committed it, I decline to do more than indicate the place of the deed. Those who can recognise it by the clue I give are at liberty to put two and two together.

Most people who have been to Switzerland will understand where the hotel of Les Trois Sages is situated. They will know that it is the chief hostelry of the large town at which the majority of tourists entering and returning from the region of the Alps usually halt, at least for a night, as from it diverge the main channels leading to the choicest scenery of the little republic. They will recollect that the inn is charmingly placed on the banks of the Rhine, and that its balconies and windows look out upon and absolutely overhang the rushing river, not a hundred miles from its falls at Schaffhausen. Enough, then, as to the locality: now, as to my coming there, and what happened.

The superfluous energy of a Briton six-and-twenty years of age, six feet two in height, and strong in proportion, finds no better outlet than scrambling over

peaks, passes, and glaciers ; and I had been doing this, on the occasion of which I write, to my heart's content, for five or six weeks. It was not my first experience of the Alps by many ; but it had, on the whole, been the least enjoyable : the companion who was going with me disappointed me at the eleventh hour, and I started alone, the limited time for my outing not brooking delay ; and though at times I fell in with pleasant people, I was bored by my solitude. My temper too, always a peppery one at the best, was considerably ruffled by the loss, towards the end of my journey, of my remaining circular notes. I most stupidly flicked the little case containing them out of my breast-pocket with my handkerchief as I was leaning over the side of the steamer coming down from Flueln to Lucerne, and I had the mortification of seeing it sink into the blue lake before my very eyes. My remaining cash was only just sufficient to carry me to—well, say, Les Trois Sages ; so immediately on reaching Lucerne I had to write home for more money, directing that it should await me at the aforesaid well-known hotel. I therefore timed my arrival there accordingly ; and it was not an hour too soon, for I could only just avoid over-staying my leave by starting for Paris by the first train the next day.

Hence it was with no little anxiety that on reaching my inn I demanded of the *concierge* whether there was any letter for me, and my satisfaction was so great when that majestic functionary handed me one, that I tore it open then and there, displaying the nature of



its contents to the throng of waiters, porters, and idlers usually hanging about hotel halls.

It being late I was soon shown to my room—a luxurious one, for an alcove, where stood the bed, was divided from the *salon* by a heavy *portière*, thus making two apartments. I took little heed, however, of these vanities at the time. I was to be off early the next morning, and ere long I was in bed and my light out. The loss of the money tended to make me now unusually careful of that which I had just received; so, though I left my watch, &c., on the table in the *salon*, I laid the packet of notes on the little marble stand at the bed-head; and it was lucky I did so.

Sound asleep! Sound is not the word for it. Dead asleep would be nearer the mark: that sort of sleep which comes to a strong man in perfect health and training, after a fatiguing day's journey. What it was that aroused me from it I shall never clearly understand; but my belief is, that it was an instinct rather than a noise which caused me, without altogether returning to consciousness, to open my eyes. My face was turned away from the wall against which one side of the bed stood, so that I looked straight across the little alcove, and through the half-drawn *portière* into the *salon*. The moon must have risen, for there was a much stronger light in the rooms than when I put out the candle, and a deep shadow was cast across the opening between them. Her rays thus flooded both apartments by the single window in each.

Now I was in that curious state that although I knew I was awake I thought I was dreaming; in fact, I was just on that mysterious frontier-land between the two states, which is not the least perplexing amongst the phenomena of a mortal existence—that is to say, I thought I was dreaming—when I saw, on first opening my eyes, the figure of a man on all-fours, crawling out of the stream of moonlight in the *salon* into the shadow cast, as I have said, by the arch and heavy folds of the *portière*.

But I knew I was awake when, losing sight of him for a minute there, I saw him again emerging into the rays of light which fell across the floor of the alcove where I lay. I knew, I say, that I was awake now, for could I not distinguish plainly, as he came very slowly and stealthily towards the bed, that his face was hidden by a sort of crape mask? And yet still, for a moment more, I thought I must be dreaming. I had never moved or raised my head from the pillow; I had simply opened my eyes, and I still abstained from movement whilst endeavouring to realise in what condition I was.

Suddenly, however, all doubt disappeared. I took in on the instant the fact that this was an attempt at robbery, perhaps worse; for, approaching the little table at the bed-head, the figure, without rising from the floor, lifted one of its hands, as if to reach the marble top. The man was within arm's length of me now, and, without giving him the slightest warning by any preliminary movement, I endeavoured to spring out

of bed straight upon him. For a second I had him by the collar ; but not being able to get clear altogether from the bed-clothes I was checked, and he slipped out of my grasp like an eel, and disappeared in the shadow.

Instantly, however, I was on my feet ; but thinking that the fellow probably would be armed, I did not grope for him, but made straight through to the door of the *salon* giving on to the landing, intending to raise an alarm and prevent an escape, but before I could draw the bolt I saw him at the window opening on to the balcony. His figure came dark between me and the moonlight, and judging that, as the casement was open, he must have entered that way, and was now endeavouring to get out by it, I once more sprang towards him, and had him in my arms just as he stepped on to the balcony and was in the act of climbing over. He struggled for a moment or two desperately of course ; but my hot temper was up now, and thinking of nothing but the insolent audacity of the intrusion and the attempted robbery, I tore him away with great violence—for he was but like a child in his strength as compared to me—and saying in my fury, ‘ Ho, ho, you scoundrel ! you want to get out this way, do you ? then, by George, you shall go ! ’ I flung him, as if he had been a truss of straw, over the balcony into—good God !—the rushing river below !

Then, and then only, for the first time, as my hands quitted hold of him, did I remember the situation of my rooms. I had been sleeping in different

ones almost every night for the last six weeks, and in the suddenness and rapidity with which the whole of the incidents had happened I entirely forgot that below the balcony rushed the impetuous Rhine. Lightning does not express the swift keenness of the agony which shot through my brain as, glaring after the wretched man, I caught a faint glimpse of his falling figure, and heard the faintest cry and splash rise for a second above the rush of the torrent.

Not being skilled in describing sensations, I abstain entirely from attempting to express what mine were now. I pulled myself together in a minute or two, endeavouring to collect my thoughts, and to settle what I ought to do. I walked to the table where I had left my watch—it was gone; to the little stand at the bed-head—my packet of notes was safe, but the hand which I had arrested, only just in time, as it rose towards them belonged to some one who knew that they were there, that was evident. Then my eye fell upon a black object lying on the floor in a streak of moonlight; it was a piece of folded crape with an elastic band attached. In the first encounter the thief's disguise had fallen off—here it was!—and I remembered that for a second on the balcony I had met the rascal's large dark eyes as they seemed starting from his head with terror.

The balcony! As I put my hand on the side of the balustrade, in the act of looking over, it touched the top of a light ladder, the other end of which on examination I could now faintly discern, in the moonlight, rested

not a dozen feet down on a long but less projecting balcony than mine, for my rooms were over a low-pitched *entresol*, to which this lower balcony belonged.

Clearly, then, it was some one engaged about the house—a waiter probably—who had attempted to rob me; one of those who had seen me open my letter and examine the notes. I bethought me also then that my movements in my room must have been watched, or that stealthy hand would never have been raised with such foreknowledge towards the spot where I had placed the money.

A long acquaintance with foreign habits had taught me that an amiable custom prevailed amongst this rascally scum of waiters of boring gimblet-holes in the corners of the door panels, through which they might become acquainted with the private proceedings of the occupants of the rooms, male or female. I was not surprised, therefore, on rekindling my candle and examining the door, to find several of these *trous-judas*, as they are playfully called; one particularly so large and so directed, that anybody in the outer passage could easily observe all that went on within the room.

My impulse now was to raise an alarm; but an instant's reflection showed me that if I did I must bid good-bye to all thoughts of reaching Paris by the early train, and of saving the limit of my leave. And was it worth my while to do this? I decided in a moment—most certainly not. Was I to expose myself to vast personal inconvenience and possible professional ruin, through not meeting my engagements, simply for the

sake of explaining to the cumbersome law of the land what had happened, and to run the risk of not being able to do so to its satisfaction, and consequently perhaps of being incarcerated as a murderer? Not a bit of it! I would see the law of Switzerland at Jericho first! As it was, I had lost my watch, and my temper leapt up in rebellion at the thought, and easily persuaded me for the time that I should be little better than a fool to risk the prospects of my life by any act so quixotic. If the rascal were drowned, it was his own fault, and there should be an end of it, as far as I was concerned. So, at least, I thought then. No; I would be off as I proposed; and with this determination I began deliberately to dress and pack my knapsack, for sleep was gone for that night. Only one doubt perplexed me. Should I leave the ladder standing where it was, and let the hotel authorities think what they liked, or (for otherwise it would only lead to inquiries and difficulties) should I fling it into the river after the man? Right or wrong, with very little hesitation I adopted the latter course.

Not a sign of life was visible as I looked once more out upon the broad river; and I thought, whilst gently letting down the ladder into the depths below, that it was not the first secret by a good many that its impetuous current had carried away into oblivion.

An hour or two later I had quietly paid my bill at the bureau, and was on my way to Paris, and by the following night was once more in my chambers in the Temple.

II.

ARGUE, reason, justify, talk about self-defence, and, if I had not done this, he would have done so-and-so and so-and-so, as much as you please, you can never quite philosophise away the very disagreeable sensation which will arise occasionally if you have ever had the misfortune, however unintentionally, to kill a man. My hot temper has often given me cause for regret, not to say remorse; but since the night when I flung the robber into the Rhine, I hope I can safely say I have curbed it. Whenever it comes bubbling up, there also comes with it the vivid recollection of that brief struggle on the balcony, and lo! it is subdued on the instant; but the recollection, alas, is not so speedily dismissed: it still hovers painfully in my memory at times, though twelve years have passed since the deed was done—twelve years! during which no mention, that I have ever seen, has been made in the papers of any one having been missed from the hotel.

Of course I have been often to Switzerland since, but somehow I have always avoided the town where stands the hostelry of Les Trois Sages, and I certainly should never think of going up the Rhine again. I strike the Alps now by other routes, and have a tendency to get well to the Italian side of them. Indeed I have but lately returned from a saunter amongst the hills in the neighbourhood of Como. What capricious fate led me there to the spot where I was to find the sequel to 'My Murder' need not be speculated upon; it

was one of those strange coincidences, I suppose, which when met with in fiction excite little surprise, but which when stated as facts are generally doubted. Here it is, however, and if it had not been a fact there would never have been any record on paper of 'My Murder.'


Well, I pulled up one day at an unpretentious little albergo, on the side of a steep declivity overlooking the 'lazy' lake. The light refreshment which I ordered was brought to me as I sat at a little table in the garden, sheltered by vines, olive, and fig-trees, by the padrone himself, a venerable gray-bearded man. Only as he set the fruit and bread down before me did I observe that he was blind. He had walked so steadily and direct from the house to where I sat that no one could have guessed at his affliction. The sudden discovery of it, together with a sorrowful expression which his face wore, touched me, and I began talking to him with what Italian I could muster. His speech showed him to be above the common herd, and after conversing for a while about the neighbourhood, and such ordinary topics, I ventured to touch on his blindness.

'O,' said he, 'that is very little, signor; men can be more severely tried than by having to live in the dark. There are worse afflictions than that.'

'Indeed,' I answered; 'do you speak from experience?'

'Truly, signor, I do.'

'You surprise me; I should have thought nothing could be worse. Do you mind telling me what you have found so?'



‘No,’ he said, slowly sitting down opposite to me ; ‘but it is a sad tale. I doubt if it can amuse the signor ; but, if he is willing to listen, I am willing to tell. It sometimes eases the heart to pour out its troubles even into the ear of a stranger. But stay, let us know how the time goes, for I have some affairs to attend to by and by.’

Whilst speaking, he thrust a hand into the pocket of his vest, and, drawing out a watch without a chain, held it towards me, adding : ‘What is the hour, signor? we blind folk are a little helpless in these matters.’

I looked into his large brown palm, and was about to answer, but the words stuck in my throat, for surely it was not the first time I had seen that dial !

‘Permit me,’ I said after a pause, as, pretending not to be quite able to see it, I endeavoured to turn the watch over in his hand, that I might by a glance at the back of it verify the idea which had crossed my mind. He felt what I was doing, and said,

‘The signor will find the time by the front, and not the back.’

‘Surely,’ I answered ; ‘it is three o’clock. But that is an English watch you have, is it not?’

‘The signor is curious ; can it signify to him of what manufacture it is?’ replied the padrone, in rather an altered tone, but not rudely.

‘O, no,’ I answered carelessly, not wishing to arouse any suspicions in him : ‘it only struck me as strange to find an English watch in these parts. Pray let me look at it.’

With a return of his former sorrowful manner, and with an air of resignation, he reluctantly handed me the watch, saying,

‘Certainly, if I tell you one thing, I may as well tell you all.’

A glimpse of the back revealed my own crest and initials; but I restrained the expression rising to my lips, and went on,

‘Ah, a good watch; may I ask how you came by it?’


‘Yes, it will appear in what I have to say; it is all sad, and is only one of the many troubles which have made me an old man before my time. Very sad indeed is all that hangs about that watch. It belonged to my son, my only son; at least it was found upon him when he was dead.’

Needless to say how I winced under the old man's words. He continued, as he passed a hand across his sightless eyes,

‘Yes, signor, he is dead these many years past, and perhaps it is as well. But, ah me! the way of it, the way of it—there is my grief. Could it have been that I had been by, and have known that there was ever so little repentance in his heart, there would have been some little comfort for me, perhaps; but, as it was, it is too probable that he went unshriven, unrepentant, suddenly to his account.’

‘Tell me, tell me,’ I said quickly, ‘the way of his death!’

But the padrone was not to be hurried. He seemed to like to linger on the pain his slowly-uttered words



brought with them, little guessing how they were paining me also. He went on :

‘ Ever a prodigal from his youth upwards, my boy grew worse and worse as he reached manhood. I had looked that he should inherit my business and good name, for they were both worth inheriting at one time. I kept an hotel at Bergamo, and for a while he was my chief waiter, but his vicious courses brought ruin on us both. He contracted debts which I had to pay ; ran away in evil company, and I heard nothing of him for years.

‘ When I did it was, as usual, with a demand for money. He was then in Switzerland as a waiter, I believe, at the hotel of Les Trois Sages—the signor knows it of course, all the English know it ; and there, I afterwards heard, it was that he, in the act probably, of attempting some desperate crime, fell one night into the Rhine, and was picked up dead as appeared. Only by a miracle could it have been that his body was not carried straight away down over the falls at Schaffhausen ; but it seems that he got entangled with the chain of the ferry which crosses the Rhine, as you know, a little below the hotel. Here again, by a miracle, it chanced that he was seen by some men who were early working at some timber rafts, and was by them carried ashore, as I have said, for dead !’

‘ But was he ?’ I inquired, with an anxiety I could ill disguise, as the old man paused.

‘ No, signor ; it was not his destiny to be drowned—would that it had been, for then he would have been

saved from the commission of his greatest crime ! No ; he was restored, to return to me and pile upon me farther anguish.

‘ He came back to Bergamo a year or two after to a smaller inn, which I was then keeping, and in a drunken brawl with some of his loose companions he used his knife with a fatal result upon an unarmed man, whose friend on the instant stabbed my son to the heart ! That is all, signor ; but the remembrance of his career has been far worse for me than the darkness.’

‘ And the watch,’ I suggested, with a sense of relief quite inexpressible, ‘ was found in his possession ?’

‘ Yes, signor ; but I doubt if he had come by it honestly, for they tell me there are a device and letters on the back in no way belonging to him. But still I treasure it for his sake, or rather for his mother’s, for he was all that remained to me of her, and she idolised him for the five years that she was spared after his birth ; and,’ added the old man, in a somewhat more cheery tone, as if the recital of his troubles had relieved him, ‘ a good English watch is useful even to a blind man.’

Most assuredly the last thing in my thoughts was to deprive him of his treasure. I was only too well repaid for my loss by what I had just heard ; only too grateful for being able, after all, even to look back with complacency upon what I nevertheless still call ‘ My Murder’ !

CLUBABLE WOMEN.

To Dr. Johnson is due the word 'clubable;' and in speaking of Boswell as a 'clubable' man, he implied that the biographer was sociable, good-tempered, and intelligent.

Judging by the marvellous increase of clubs nowadays, it is fair in some degree to assume that these qualifications also are on the increase; at any rate, the first must be getting common, for although doubtless in every club members are to be found who are not sociable, still the very essence of club-life is, in the main, sociability, and this can hardly exist without good temper. Great intelligence is of course an admirable and most desirable addition to a 'clubable' man, but it is not the first element of importance; certainly he must not be stupid; but, on the other hand, he need not be clever. Indeed, the display in any excess of this quality raises a man so much above the ordinary run of humanity, that it may go far to destroy his claim to be held as a clubable man. He will be too much of a dictator; and though he may rule by reason of his wit and humour, unless he skilfully restrains their exuberance, he will, by monopolising the conversation and laying down the law, cease to be thoroughly clubable.

Political associations of men, rival institutions representing the abode of parties, palatial habitations founded and kept up as places of rendezvous for conference among the members on more or less public matters, but still called clubs, are only so in the sense that they are homogeneous ; sociability being entirely a secondary consideration. Such assemblages are not to be confounded with those to which Johnson referred when he invented the word 'clubable.'

A club, in the true sense of the name, should be a haven of rest from the cares of the world or of home, where, by an agreeable interchange of comment and opinion on matters of interest outside the ordinary avocations of the day, a state of harmonious quiet shall be induced as the fittest preparation for bed. Animated discussion should never extend into violent controversy ; wit and good humour must temper every sarcasm ; chaff may be abundant ; but, in a sociable club, beware of profound argument, for the dulness even of the village alehouse gossips over their churchwardens in the chimney-corner of the bar-parlour is infinitely preferable, from the clubbist point of view, to anything bordering on the tone of a debating society.

Clubable men understand these things as a matter of course ; and presuming, as we have said, that clubable men are becoming pretty universal, or new clubs would not be so numerous, we are led to inquire why it is that clubable women are so rare ? And out of this inquiry comes another : Is it not the very clubability of the man which makes socially his great distinction

from woman? In these days, when she is putting forward with so much demonstration her claims for equality with, if not superiority to, man, may we not pause to consider if the lack (save in rare instances) of those qualities which make men clubable will not for ever prevent her from becoming his competitor?

Not that we would imply for one second that she is not sociable, good-tempered, or intelligent; but amongst her own sex, until she comes to be upon what may be called schoolfellow-like intimacy, she has the strangest knack of disguising these attributes. In the company of men, in mixed society, she will display them readily enough; but throw her into an assemblage composed entirely of women comparatively unknown to her, and she immediately cloaks herself in a reserve, a stand-offishness, to which men under similar conditions are as a rule perfect strangers. There is a total absence of that frankness and open-heartedness, and that undisguised and easy affability, which well-bred men display towards each other upon the slightest acquaintance. Amongst the latter no fear of comment is apparent; they are not conscious of the details of each other's dress; they do not tremble to think of what is being thought of them—because they know they are scarcely being thought of at all; they are perfectly self-possessed, and, if thoroughly clubable men, fall into the general conversation, without the slightest *gêne* or reserve; they have, in a word, a *savoir faire* and a *savoir vivre* not to be found amongst the generality of women. The man has no sense of rivalry,

whilst the other sex is overwhelmed by it; he does not care a whiff of tobacco if he be the least fashionably dressed of the multitude, whilst *her* peace of mind is entirely destroyed on discovering that all her sisters are better or more fashionably attired than she. In *his* heart there is no rancour, *hers* is filled with envy; and the mere sense of doubt on this point which steals over her before she has had time to take in the details of her sisters' looks and appointments, in itself induces an uneasiness detrimental to clubability. The doubt whether she be up to the mark or not peeps out somehow, and destroys her perfect sangfroid. Very few men know anything of these sensations, and, above all, they are never over-awed (as is the case with the women) by a thought of Mrs. Grundy. The sensations of the two sexes appear to be entirely reversed; for whilst amongst themselves men are on the whole more at their ease than when in the presence of women, women, on the other hand, are more at their ease in the presence of men than when wholly amongst themselves.

Of course we are speaking of general society, of rational intelligent beings—the middle stratum, as it were, lying between the very dressy flippant fops and belles on the one hand, and the very slovenly fogies and dowdies on the other. Not but what, even in the two extremes, the leading instincts of the sexes betray themselves to a considerable extent. Efforts, therefore, that have from time to time been made to establish ladies' clubs have never succeeded thoroughly; and the failure seems to us more significant and prophetic than

will be willingly admitted by the proclaimers of 'women's rights.' Until women can generally be brought to associate with each other as cordially and under the same conditions of easy sociability as men—until, in fact, they become 'clubable'—unmitigated equality of the sexes is a physiological impossibility.

On the whole, then, do we want women to be 'clubable' in the Johnsonian sense? Scarcely; for if they were, it would involve utter abnegation of maidenly and womanly attractions, and would develop an independence destructive to their dignity, if not their virtue; for who shall say *where* independence—which is the war-cry of the woman's rights party—is to stop? Where is the limit to be drawn? If our daughters are to be equally independent with our sons, of course they must have latch-keys. If the dinners at home do not please, or the company is dull and the wine bad, no protest must be entered against the young ladies adjourning to their club. Tom and Charley come and go, like the swallows, at their sweet will. They ask a couple of friends to dine with them at the governor's hospitable board, go off to the play afterwards, and return in a hansom in the small hours. If Maud and Ethel are to be on the same footing, equally independent with their brothers, and equally 'clubable,' why are they to be denied the freedom readily accorded to the latter as soon as they verge on man's estate? If the talk now prevalent about founding a club commonly open to ladies and gentlemen has any foundation in it, the plan is hardly likely to meet with better success

than the attempt to establish 'ladies' clubs;' for then barriers natural and essential to civilised society would be swept away, and chaos be the result.

No; a 'clubable' woman is an anomaly, and long may she remain so! Yet, notwithstanding her appeals for the suffrage and the rest of the masculine privileges so called, she will never acquire them until she so far derogates from her position as to be quite eligible for the Athenæum, the Garrick, and the Arts.

So let her see whether she cannot console herself; let her stop her ears for a while to the clamour rising in her behalf, and endeavour to discover if after all she really be the abject unhappy slave her over-zealous and unthinking advocates strive to represent her. The ground has been already a little trodden perhaps, but it is worth while nevertheless to go over some of it again and again, for the benefit of those ladies who blindly regret that they are not men, and who pine for the privileges of what may be generalised as 'club life,' and all appertaining thereunto. It may be, however, as well to note that these fair creatures are in the minority. Happily, not one in fifty—no, not one in a hundred, if the whole of the middle-class female population of the United Kingdom were polled—would desire the luxuries of club life in addition or in preference to the humbler comforts of their own homes. But, for the sake of the few—the comparative few, as they really are—let us see in the first place what it is of which their sex and the 'tyranny of man' combined (as they say) deprives them; and, in the second, what remains open to them, and

whether as yet they have shown themselves fully ready to take advantage of those opportunities which they have always indisputably possessed.

Well, first then, they cannot practise as attorneys and solicitors, or be called to the bar; nor are they eligible for commissions in the army, the navy, or marines; nor may they enlist in either of these services. They cannot be custom-house or excise officers, letter-carriers or letter-sorters in the metropolitan district. No bishop would ordain a woman; neither would any dissenting body, except the sect of the Quakers, allow a woman to conduct public worship. The English universities refuse to matriculate a woman; women are not eligible as members of clubs, and they are not allowed to vote. And here nearly all their legal disabilities end.

Secondly, then, what remains open to them is nearly every other profession and every trade under heaven. There is no reason why colliers or merchant-ships should not have women for crews and commanders; they may drive cabs and wagons, become civil engineers, or work as navvies and field-labourers. They can make hay, why should they not cut it? Races might be ridden by female jockeys, for it is generally found that when young, girls are lighter weights than boys. Other callings probably there are too which do not occur to us, and, as there is nothing to hinder them from entering upon any walk of art, literature, or science, surely there are outlets enough for the expenditure of that energy and capacity which it is asserted women


possess to a greater, or at least an equal, degree with men.

This being the case then, how comes it that they have so neglected their opportunities for distinction ?

We shall be told that they do not want to be sailors in the merchant service, civil engineers, miners, carpenters, bricklayers, what not. Granted ; but how many *men want* to be always what they are ? If they have to earn their bread, they are not always able to consult their inclinations and tastes in the choice of a calling ; and if women are really so superior or equal to men, and could do all these things equally well or better, why do they not rise to the occasion and necessity when they want to earn a living ; and by putting their feelings in their pockets, sacrifice themselves to labour which is distasteful to them, as men do by the thousand ?

Why ? Because Nature has put, broadly speaking, an insuperable barrier in these matters between the male and female, and the grievance about woman not being allowed to do things which she could do as well or better than man is not a true one.

A lady falls ill if she gets wet and goes longer than usual without food or drink ; women bear cold very badly, and heat, if anything, worse ; they knock up under anything like continuous bodily exertion ; and their physical disabilities will be urged against their adoption of the rougher and sterner avocations of life. But those who put forward this plea must remember that in doing so they are foregoing the superiority of



women, at least in bodily strength, and it is only, we suppose, amongst the fanatics in the cause that an attempt would be made to maintain it.

Let us come, however, to the question of mental capacity, power, and endurance. It is not unusual to hear that a girl of seventeen or eighteen at school has overworked herself, and permanently injured her health, with an amount of application to books which her brother at college would think nothing of when he has 'to mug up' for his 'little go.' But without laying any stress on such a circumstance, we are of course quite ready to admit the existence of an enormous amount of mental power and capacity in the female sex. No one can dispute it or wish to do so; yet, if it exists in the same or in greater proportion than in men, how is it that we do not find women distinguishing themselves to the same extent as men in walks of life which are quite compatible with their sex, and in following which they need not in the least degree derogate from anything that is feminine and delicate? How comes it, for instance, that in music, which is certainly a feminine pursuit, we have no female composers—not one that can be put beside Handel, Beethoven, Mozart, or Mendelssohn—no, nor yet by the side of far inferior musicians? Has any woman ever written an opera to compare with say the commonplace *Somnambula*? Yet we suppose it will not be denied that the study of music is common ground, open to both sexes. Farther, has there ever dawned upon the world a female Titian, Michael Angelo, Raphael, Velasquez, Rubens, Vandyke, or

Paul Veronese, &c. ? Or, to come a stage lower, can we put our finger upon any lady portrait-painter who has not been excelled in her particular line by a host of artists whose reputation does not approach within miles of that of Sir Joshua Reynolds or Sir Peter Lely ? Or, once more, has landscape-painting, a pursuit peculiarly harmonious with female tastes, ever received increased celebrity through the cunning of a woman's hand ? Where is the female Turner, Constable, Claude, &c. ?

Those who dispute the superiority of man should show where he has been beaten. Has it been in sculpture ? Have Praxiteles, Phidias, or again, a little lower down, Gibson, Thorwaldsen, Dannecker, or Storey been distanced by women ? In what department of art, literature, science, knowledge, or in what general intellectual walk have women excelled men ? Is it in music, painting, sculpture ? It would seem not. Is it in poetry or architecture ? If so, what immortal poems have women produced ? Can they boast a Homer, a Dante, a Shakespeare, a Goethe ? What Gothic cathedrals, Grecian or Egyptian temples, have been designed by, and raised under, the superintendence of women ? To pursue this strain may look invidious and unchivalrous ; but if it be maintained that women can do many things, if not better at least as well as men, we are forced into it, and defy its refutation as a broad principle ; for it is no refutation to have the names of some half-dozen eminent women pointed to as the equals of men. No greater novelists have ever lived than George Eliot and Georges Sand ; lesser feminine lights, but

still very bright ones, have shone, and are shining. Rosa Bonheur is at the head of her profession unquestionably, and some other deft lady handlers of the brush run her close, if not in her particular walk, at least as an artist. If twenty similar or more striking instances could be quoted (though we confess we find it difficult to remember one more as strong, unless we go to the stage, lyric or dramatic, and speak of Mrs. Siddons, Miss O'Neil, Malibran, Viardot-Garcia, or Grisi) by the insisters upon women's claims, our position would not be in the least affected, and we should still be able to point to what we have said about music, painting, sculpture, poetry, and architecture as incontrovertible.

But once more. If the ladies' rights champions shift their ground, and declare that things are as they are because women have not been properly educated, and from the conventionalities of society have not been allowed a fair chance, then we fall back on the non-clubability of woman, and repeat that in that little social distinction from man exists an insuperable obstacle to her fully competing with him, be she trained and educated ever so highly. In other words, her very nature precludes her from contending with him in the battle of life; and nowhere does this natural distinction display itself more conspicuously than upon clubable ground. Here the unfailing difference in the natures of the sexes is essentially apparent; for in addition to the peculiarities which at starting we referred to as making her unclubable, there step in all the home and

domestic affections, the thousand-and-one attractions which the house and household have for a woman, and to which men are comparatively insensible. You may educate her and train her to the utmost of her capacity, but you cannot—Heaven be praised!—make her shine anywhere so brightly as at home. In the perfect governing of all that this word implies, she will be doing her best work, and the effects of which will be more lasting for good than any other she is capable of. Instinctively she will turn to that as her proper sphere in the end, however much she may have from time to time been dazzled by the war-cries of independence and equality. When she knows their real worth, she will shrink from sweeping away those social lines of demarcation which society, in consideration of her feminine attributes, has drawn around her. She will not pine for a club, and all that the word implies, when she discovers that it is not her true element. She will not want a latch-key when she finds at what cost of social protection and position it is purchasable.

At present, after all, she has the best of the bargain, all clamour to the contrary notwithstanding. She is not hardly, unjustly, cruelly treated, as is sometimes asserted; she is not treated in this civilised country as a slave and a beast of burden, unjustly deprived of civil rights, overtasked, overdriven, oppressed, and bullied in every way, much as Neapolitans treat their donkeys and mules. Surely the very contrary is the case. Who is the breadwinner in the low, the lower, and the lowest strata of society? Who brings home

the one, two, three, or four guineas a week to the common store, from which the man, the woman, the children are housed, fed, and clothed? Is it the superior woman or the inferior man? Who goes down the mine? Who guides the plough? Who rises early and goes late to bed, and spends the livelong day in toil of some sort or another? In the partition of this sum of money, or the articles representing it, and which has entirely arisen from the labour of one of the partners, is it true that there is any great inequality between the enjoyment of the two sexes? Is the miner's wife worse fed, worse clothed, worse housed than her man, who has earned it all? Is the carpenter's 'missus,' or the costermonger's, or the navy's? So far from it being true that in that class of life the woman gets less than an equal share, we believe she gets more, absolutely and infinitely more, if the earnings of the partners are compared.

So much for the lower strata. What about the higher? The good things of their world consist of pudding and praise, money and approbation. We cannot tell of course how all women in the upper classes fare, but, generally speaking, they receive, for the very moderate trouble of allowing themselves to be married, and being decently well-conducted—that is to say, acting up to their contract—the liver wing of the chicken and the sunny side of the peach. A professional man, or say one of the *bourgeois* class, whose income is obtained by his professional exertions, takes a wife, a partner who, in many instances, bringing no capital

into the concern, is to share and share alike, and who gets the best half on the not very onerous conditions of being faithful, and bearing him children; in other words, fulfilling her share of the agreement. He is to earn the money, and she is to spend it; and this lady partner is said to be an overtasked, overdriven slave, &c.

If too, unluckily, she has made a bad choice of a husband, has been deceived, and finds that she has sworn to love, honour, and obey a gambler, a drunkard, or worse, it cannot be urged that society has done her an outrage; she took the risk, and, much as she is to be pitied, it cannot be contended that any readjustment of the relative position of the sexes would prevent such miseries from occasionally occurring.

So, then, we come back again to the statement that, on the whole, at present woman has still the best of the bargain; and this without the suffrage and the privileges of a club. The former may be quite a question of property and its responsibilities. No one will dispute that, with a certain stake in the country, and under certain conditions, there may be reason in giving her a voice in its government; but everybody who is acquainted with her true nature knows that a club is not an institution in which she can ever hope to shine. A very little experience will teach her this; and if she has any insight into human nature she will see that it is because she is essentially, in the Johnsonian sense, not a 'clubable' being.

ST. VALENTINE'S LOTTERY.

In Two Drawings.

I. THE FIRST DRAWING.

EARLY days for sketching out of doors. Mid February does not generally in our climate offer much temptation to the landscape-painter to take the field. But Frank Hilary was young, strong, and enthusiastic, full of determination, and ready to brave all the vicissitudes of the artist's career, bad weather included.

But the weather was not bad on the occasion when we first made his acquaintance, as he sat quietly working at a water-colour drawing of some grand pollard oaks—quite the contrary, for the sky and the temperature on the 14th of February, A.D. 1870, was suggestive rather of midsummer. It was one of those sudden bursts of spring-promise with which we are sometimes favoured, only, as it would seem, to emphasise the rigours of the March and April that are to follow.

The woods were alive with song, the feathered choristers availing themselves to the utmost, everywhere, of the encouragement the sun was giving to their love-mak-

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ing. True, the trees were bare, freezingly bare, with an uncanny skeleton-like look about them, whilst the dense masses of evergreen shrubbery which somehow had got itself mixed up with the brambles and sodden bracken on the skirts of the oak copse which Hilary was sketching, brought into strong relief, here and there, the silvery boles and rugged, gnarled trunks of the forest monarchs. The timid crocus and primrose peeped out now and again from amongst the weltering heaps of last autumn's russet leaves, and even massed themselves as unmistakable patches of colour along the ridge of broken gravelly bank which, amphitheatre-like, made an uncommonly snug nook for the painter.

It was a singularly sheltered and sequestered spot, and sitting there so quietly as he did, the very squirrels came down from their trees, and the rabbits from their burrows, to within arm's length of him before they saw him. It was altogether a paradise of a place for a painter, whilst the fine foreground of gnarled timber, the wide stretch of park, the peep of blue distance, and the gabled roofs, twisted chimneys, and ivy-clad turrets of Croyston Towers made up a subject which must have struck even the most indifferent.

Frank Hilary had found his way hither from Hadenham, a house three miles off, where he was staying whilst painting the portrait of a favourite child, one of several daughters of a Mr. Hughes, the owner of the place. He had nearly completed it, and would probably have returned to London without so much as catching a glimpse of Croyston Towers, had not the sudden ill-

ness of the little girl prevented her from sitting to him for two or three days. But as the picturesque fame of the neighbouring old mansion was proverbial, Hilary availed himself of the fine weather and his unlooked-for leisure to walk over and possibly make a sketch of the celebrated Tudor mansion.

He had approached to within a quarter of a mile of it by a path across the park, when he suddenly came upon the oak-trees and the composition they made with the distant view of the house. Halting within the little amphitheatre of broken bank where we find him sitting, he exclaimed, 'Whew! how hot it is! it's like June! I can walk no farther; this subject is good enough for me;' and he went to work accordingly.

It was about ten o'clock when he first opened his camp-stool, and for two hours he remained completely absorbed and undisturbed. Looking up at last, towards the left, where the evergreens trended away in a sort of wilderness until they reached the shrubbery and gardens of the mansion, what was his surprise to see a young lady sitting within some thirty yards of him, also sketching? Her profile was towards him, and it was very evident to him, after a few minutes' contemplation, that she, like the squirrels and rabbits, had come to these close quarters quite unconscious of his presence. Moreover, from the general lay of the land, the bank, and the shrubs, his ambush was pretty nearly complete. He had a perfect view of her, but unless she were to advance a few paces, and then look straight back into

his little amphitheatre, she probably could not see him at all. She made a striking figure, one not likely to be overlooked by an artist.

‘How charmingly she comes there!’ said Frank to himself. ‘By Jove, I must make a line or two of her. What luck! why, if one had wanted a figure to fit, here it is—colour perfect, form exquisite!’

With rapid strokes the skilled hand soon produced an unmistakable presentment, slight at first, but growing by degrees into a vivid reproduction. The soft woollen dress of a lovely olive-gray green, with collar and cuffs of dark fur, contrasted well with the rich golden twists of hair kept nattily in their place by a knot of deep-crimson ribbon shining out quite brilliantly under the shady black hat covered with nestling feathers, whilst the slightest peep of a crimson petticoat carried the warm tone artistically through the composition. As one by one such details were completed, the artist's enthusiasm and admiration increased. When she moved slightly, he paused in an agony lest the pose should be irremediably altered. When she turned her head, he winced lest she might see him, and so take flight abashed; but within an hour and a half he had managed to complete a most attractive sketch in water-colour, perfectly unmistakable in its likeness. The delicate piquant profile even had been caught, and was as like as all the rest, notwithstanding the distance betwixt artist and sitter; for Frank's clear blue eye was far-reaching and penetrating.

One o'clock rang out from the turret of Croyston

Towers. The young lady rose hastily, gathered her traps together, and hurried away through the wilderness towards the house.

‘What a nuisance!’ cried Frank aloud; ‘I only wanted about another half-hour, and I could have finished it thoroughly—well, never mind. I’ll come over again to-morrow, and very likely she will come too; she is an enthusiast evidently, dear little creature, from the way she stuck to her work; amateurs generally are. I wonder who she is?’

Then Frank went on with his oak-trees through the remainder of the lovely afternoon, and came again the next day, as he said, to finish them; it could not have been for any other purpose, of course; but somehow he could not finish them; circumstances were just as propitious for work, and the weather was equally fine, but nevertheless he could not settle to it. Instead of looking at his subject, he was for ever turning his head to the left, towards that shrubbery of a wilderness, as if he expected something besides bushes to appear there. Nothing else, however, was visible throughout the whole day; and it became quite evident to the least interested in such matters that the oak-trees would still require one more day’s work. His host saw this plainly; and as the little sitter was not yet quite well, there was no difficulty on that head; so, for the third time, Hilary went to his oak-trees, and then he finished them; but he had no chance of finishing that other drawing—‘she’ never appeared again.

‘What is the name of the family at Croyston

Towers?' asked Frank casually of Mr. Hughes at dinner that evening.

'Belport is the family name,' was the answer; 'but there is only old Lady Belport living there now, the dowager. Croyston is made to do duty for the Dower House.'

'There is not much life, then, going on there now, I suppose?' said Frank.

'O dear, no; only people who go over to look at the place, or, like yourself, to make a sketch of it; it's a favourite subject with artists, as you know.'

'Yes, in the summer; there are plenty of them then, no doubt, but not at this time of the year, of course,' went on Frank.

'By no means; I have seen people sketching there in the depth of winter,' replied the host.

'H'm,' thought Hilary, 'she couldn't have been staying in the house then. I wonder who she was, and where she came from?'

Surely if he had wanted to know so very much, he might have shown the sketch of the young lady in the wilderness to Mr. Hughes, who, being a local magnate, might have been able to tell him who she was. But he did nothing of the kind, and he returned to London without making an effort, as it seemed, to find out; but then everybody knows that artists are very odd inconsequent fellows about some things.

II. THE SECOND DRAWING.

'CONGRATULATE you on your picture, Hilary!—it's the best bit of landscape I've seen of yours; and that figure of the girl sketching is charming.'

'Glad you like it. It's not much in my line, landscape—and Croyston Towers is such a hackneyed subject that I hardly know how I came to paint it; but I saw it this winter, during some wonderfully fine weather, and I thought it looked new rather, and I have made a good deal of the figure, as you see.'

'Yes; and very, very charming it is—delightful feeling about it; very nice, indeed, old fellow!—rather a pity you didn't paint it larger.'

'Hadn't time.'

'However, they have given it a first-rate place; you are sure to sell it.'

Now the first-rate place in question was a conspicuous spot on the line in the water-colour room of the Royal Academy Exhibition; and the occasion when Frank Hilary received the above and many more congratulatory criticisms from his friends was the varnishing day, just prior to the opening. The rooms were crowded with the brethren of the brush, chatting and commenting, dusting and touching up their works, as they are privileged to do at such times, undisturbed by the outer world.

Just as the last words of Frank's friend fell from his lips, the two painters were joined by several others.

'Who is the lady, Hilary?' cries one; 'she's deuced nice! Evidently a likeness, old man?'

'Yes, it is a likeness, I am bound to say; and she comes pretty well there, I think.'

'Ah, you knew her, you rascal, and got her to sit.'

'Not at all; but you fellows want to know too much. It doesn't matter to you who she is if you like the result; that's sufficient, isn't it?' said Hilary, biting his lip.

'Well,' chimed in yet another brother of the brush who here came up, 'if he won't let on about his model, we know where to go for the model of an artist!'

'What do you mean?' said Hilary.

'O, I like that! You don't mean to say you don't know what I mean?'

'I'll swear I don't!'

'What! haven't you seen your likeness? Will you tell me you haven't been sitting to somebody?'

'No, on my word!'

'Well, then, it's the most extraordinary likeness I ever saw; come and look: it's rather a clever drawing too. Here, it's over here, at the end of the room.'

And Hilary was carried off by two or three of his friends, and brought up in front of a water-colour drawing. It represented an artist at work out of doors in winter, ensconced in a sheltered little nook, with a background of broken bank, pollard oak-trees, and in the distance a peep of—why, Croyston Towers, surely! Frank Hilary was rather taken aback, for of a certainty he was the artist. Yes, there he was; just as he must have ap-

peared on that memorable 14th of February and for the two succeeding days. There could be no mistake; he plainly saw the likeness in the face, to say nothing of the fidelity with which his favourite rough shooting-coat, wideawake, &c. had been reproduced. Besides, there was the place quite recognisable. What did it mean? Stooping down to examine the drawing, for it was hung low, he was so absorbed in wonder, that he did not hear the little bursts of raillery and laughter in which his friends continued to indulge. He kept peering and peering, as if to find out who was the painter; but there were no initials, no name in the corner, nothing to give him a clue.

'I should like to take it down and have a look at the back, to see who it is done by,' said he abstractedly.

'Just as if you didn't know, Frank. You must wait till Monday for the catalogue, eh, before you can possibly find out? What rot it is your pretending to be so innocent! Why, he's actually blushing, look!'

And the remark of his friend, whilst it raised more merriment amongst the others, was strictly true; he *was* blushing, for a sudden idea had crossed his mind.

Was this portrait of himself in any way the solution of the problem of *her* non-reappearance? He remembered that the 14th of February was St. Valentine's day, and this strengthened his idea, though why it should one could hardly guess, for artists do not generally attend much to dates, nor are they very accurate about them.

During the next two or three hours which Frank Hilary spent in the rooms of Burlington House, he paid many furtive visits to the water-colour room, in the hope of catching some one dusting the glass over his portrait, and so perhaps find out what sort of an individual the artist might be. But nobody gave the least care to the drawing, and Frank was fain to go home in ignorance of who had turned him to such picturesque account. This was on the Tuesday, Thursday was the press day, on Friday came the private view; but Hilary was not high up enough on the ladder of notoriety to be invited, and so he never got a peep into a catalogue. However, he should find out all about it on Monday he thought, and was pacifying his impatience with this reflection and a final pipe on the Friday evening in question, when the last post brought him a letter. It was an important-looking letter too, only the second of its kind he had ever received; but he knew it, and tore it open impatiently. With the official heading of the Royal Academy of Arts, the printed form with names, dates, &c. filled in, it ran thus:

‘Sir,—I have to intimate to you that your work, No. 631 in the Catalogue of the Royal Academy for the present year, entitled “A Lady sketching Croyston Towers, St. Valentine’s day,” and priced 40*l.*, has been selected for purchase by Mr. Raphael Maddox of 888 Piccadilly. As the Royal Academy only undertakes to register the selection of works, it is left to the artist to communicate with the purchaser in reference to the

payment and delivery of the work at the close of the exhibition.

‘I am, sir, yours,

——.

‘To Frank Hilary, Esq.’

‘Capital!’ thought Frank, ‘this is luck indeed! But who is Mr. Raphael Madder? Why, if I’m not mistaken, he’s an artists’ colourman; keeps one of those fashionable West-end shops, all polish and paste-board, to tempt the amateur; and if so he is only a dummy put forward by the real purchaser, who does not want to be known. He could not have been himself at the private view. I shall see about it the first thing to-morrow morning.’

And early on the Saturday Frank walked off to No. 888 Piccadilly, to find his conjecture correct.

‘Yes, sir,’ said the shopman, ‘we have been advised by our customer of the purchase, and have been directed to hand you a cheque for the amount on Monday, on the receipt of your order to receive the picture at the close of the exhibition.’

‘But your customer,’ said Frank, ‘who is your customer?’

‘We are not at liberty to say, sir; it was made a particular request that we should *not* say. We often act as agents for our customers in these matters. It saves wealthy people a deal of trouble.’

‘H’m,’ said Frank, ‘I should like to have known where my picture was going nevertheless. You are really stating facts, are you? I mean you are not going in for picture-dealing yourselves.’

'O, dear no, sir. As I say, we do a great deal of agency business of this kind; you will find our name and address given in the catalogue frequently; that is for amateur ladies and gentlemen who don't want their own residences given. See,' went on the man, producing a new but much rumpled catalogue of the Exhibition, 'here we are; here's a case this year, "Brown, Corisande, No. 842, care of Mr. Raphael Madder, &c." ' His finger was travelling down the alphabetical list of contributors at the end of the book. Frank pounced on it eagerly (now he should find out at least the name of the artist who had painted *him*); and saying, 'Allow me,' sought out the water-colour room. Quickly his eye took in a page or two of numbers, titles, and artists' names. Presently he blushed visibly; there it was undoubtedly; that was it—'No. 842—An Artist sketching; Croyston Towers, St. Valentine's day;' and who had painted it, after all? Why, 'Corisande Brown'! Then Frank turned to the alphabetical list again to make sure.

'What did you say was the name?' he was going on. 'Yes, certainly, "Corisande Brown," I see, care of Mr. Raphael Madder. O then,' addressing the man behind the counter, 'this picture is by another of your customers?'

The man's eye was following Frank's pointing finger. 'Yes, that is so, sir,' was the answer.

'Do you know if it is for sale?'

'Cannot say, sir, but I should fancy not; amateurs do not generally care to sell.'

'And who is Corisande Brown, may I ask?'

'I am not at liberty to say, sir; it is quite anonymous; in point of fact, I don't know; Mr. Madder manages these things.'

'H'm, very mysterious, indeed,' said Frank half angrily; 'you won't tell me who bought my picture, and you won't tell me who painted a picture I admire; and, supposing I want to buy it, you won't tell me whether it is for sale. Strange way of doing business.'

'These are my orders, sir; but I'll find out. I'll ask Mr. Madder if he thinks the drawing you refer to is to be had.'

'Well, I wish you would. I saw it on the varnishing day, and I should like to have it if it is not too much. Well, then, if I call on Monday,' continued Frank, after a pause, 'and give you an order to receive my picture, you say you will give me a cheque for the amount?'

'Yes, sir, and let you know about the drawing at the same time. Good-morning, sir.'

Very much puzzled indeed was Frank with all this. Strange that the portrait of himself should have been christened much as he had christened his portrait of *her*. 'A Lady sketching; Croyston Towers, St. Valentine's day.' 'An Artist sketching; Croyston Towers, St. Valentine's day.' Odd, too, that Mr. Madder should be acting as agent for the exhibition of the one and for the purchase of the other. Well, it is a coincidence, of course, but, all things remembered, it's a strange one! And Frank went his way musing.

After a hasty run through the rooms on Monday, the opening day, he marched straight off again to Mr. Madder's, and found the cheque, signed by that purveyor of artists' materials, awaiting him. Duly acknowledging it, and giving his order for the delivery of the picture to Mr. Madder, he said,

'Well, what about that drawing? is it for sale?'

'No, sir.'

'Positively?'

'Positively.'

'Now it is not by any chance the work of the same person who bought my picture, is it?'

'Really I don't know, sir; I cannot say.'

'They are both customers of yours?'

'Yes, sir.'

'But they are not both the same person?'

'Upon my word, sir,' said the man, smiling, 'I am not at liberty to say anything.'

No, and strive as he would, Frank could get no more out of Mr. Raphael Madder's man; but he drew his own conclusions, and he had to wait six weeks before he obtained any relief for the unusually perplexed state of his intellect.

The evening set apart by the President and Council of the Royal Academy for their grand *soirée* and reception came round, as it usually does, towards the end of June. Mr. Frank Hilary, like the rest of the exhibitors, was bidden to the entertainment, there to mingle with the motley throng, ranging from the highest in the land to the most obscure followers of art—yes, like the

rest of the exhibitors, for they are all invited. 'She' might be there, then; at any rate, 'Corisande Brown' would be invited, and supposing she and the purchaser of his picture were one and the same person, why, he might see her, perhaps! So he went to Burlington house in a state of undue trepidation. Constantly he found himself prowling in the neighbourhood, first of his own portrait and then of his own picture. Suddenly, on coming within range of the latter, he started, and had any of his jocose friends been with him (which he thanked his stars was not the case) he certainly would again have become a butt for their good-humoured chaff, for he was blushing up to the roots of his hair.

A little knot of people were standing in front of No. 631, 'A Lady sketching;' &c., evidently examining it with keen interest. One person only, however, in this group had any attraction for Frank. He saw nobody but her; for there she was, unmistakably, looking at her own portrait! Her profile was towards him, as it had been when he made the sketch, as it was now in its reproduction in the finished drawing. The likeness, under this severe test, was even more striking than ever, in spite of the vast difference in costume. In a bewilderment of admiration—not, be it understood, of his own skill, but of her beauty—Hilary hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels. A hand on his shoulder aroused him, and turning, he was face to face with Mr. Hughes, his host at Hadenham.

'Glad to meet you, Mr. Hilary. I have been looking at your picture of Croyston Towers: it is capital!

I recognised it from its fidelity to the sketch you showed me, which you made whilst staying with us; but the figure, the young lady, that was not in your original drawing, I think?—that, I suppose, was a separate study which you did not show me?' and there was an airy significance in Mr. Hughes's last words.

Recovering from his momentary confusion, and stammering out something about its being an after-thought, Frank saw that Mr. Hughes made one of the party that had been looking at his picture.

'It is a capital likeness,' continued that gentleman. 'I know the lady intimately, and she is amazed and puzzled to imagine how you obtained her portrait; for she declares she never sat to you, and is highly indignant. She wishes me to present you to her, however, that she may ask you and call you to account. Allow me: Mr. Hilary, Miss Dacres;' and Frank immediately found himself bowing to his nymph of the woods.

'I am rather pleased with your picture, Mr. Hilary,' she said condescendingly, in a voice that, notwithstanding the hauteur of its tone, set his whole frame tingling; 'it is very like—the place, I mean; we live close to Croyston, and I know it well.'

'I am glad you approve,' said Frank, now no longer blushing, his courage having risen to the occasion.

'But, pray,' she went on, 'how did you get a like—'

'Ah,' he broke in, 'I know what you are going to say. I must ask your forgiveness. A thousand pardons for having taken such a liberty; but it was irre-

sistible—I mean, you were irresistible; as an artist yourself you can understand how well you came against those dark evergreens.'

'Yes, you have made my dress tell very well, I grant,' she said, glancing towards the picture with an air of patronage; 'but I want to know, and I insist on being told, how you were able to make a likeness of me?—and how do you know I am an artist? Is there anything in my personal appearance that suggests the æsthetic?'

'Yes; particularly when I see you on a camp-stool, with a colour-box on your thumb!'

'Pray, where did you ever see me so?'

'Why, there—where I have painted you!' and Hilary pointed to the picture.

'Indeed! I was not aware that I was being watched. I did not know that espionage was one of the many accomplishments of a painter.'

'I apologise. I dared not let you see me, or I should have lost my one great opportunity; but you had your revenge, I fancy,' he added, looking straight into her dark-gray eyes, which she immediately dropped.

'I don't understand,' she said. 'I certainly did not see you when I was sketching "Old Croyston"'—an emphasis on 'Old Croyston'—'on that very fine St. Valentine's day.'

'Ah!' cried Frank; 'no, you did not see me then; but how about the next day, and the next? They were equally fine; did not you go again to the oak copse?'

'Really I don't remember,' she answered, a little confused.

'No? There is a picture over there—if you won't mind coming to the other end of the room—that might possibly help your memory; it is rather a curious coincidence.'

Frank offered his arm, and they moved away, followed by Mr. Hughes and his two elder daughters, who were with him.

Hilary stopped of course immediately in front of his own portrait.

'That's it,' he said. 'Odd coincidence, is it not? —"An Artist sketching" instead of "A Lady sketching"?''

She made a pretence of looking at the picture, and then of searching for it in the catalogue. Then she said naïvely,

' "Corisande Brown,"—who is she?'

'Ah, who indeed! Whoever she is, she is clever enough; and you see who she has been painting, don't you?'

'It is not unlike you, Mr. Hilary,' she said, with an air of supreme innocence.

'No, not very unlike indeed. I was so vain that I wanted to buy it, because it was like—'

'And you could not?'

'No; Corisande Brown won't sell it.'

'You must take that as a compliment; she does not want to part with you.'

'Ah, if I could only think that! But I don't de-

serve such happiness, because, you see, I *have* sold her portrait'—he chanced this bold shot—'and I have been miserable ever since; and what's more, I can't find out who has bought it.'

'Perhaps Corisande Brown has bought it,' said Miss Dacres archly—the shot seemed to have told—'perhaps she wants it as a companion to her artist; the drawings are much the same size, and would make a happy pair—a pair of Valentines, in fact.'

Mr. Hughes here interrupted and changed the conversation by a reference to some other picture, to Frank's infinite disgust; and what with the jostling of the crowd and the talk of the rest of the party, he never again that night got a word with Miss Dacres. He hovered round her, but she had evidently no intention that he should pursue the subject; and after a while Frank lost sight of her and her friends entirely, as they mingled with the company. He was in an agony of despair, and rushed wildly about the rooms; but people were beginning to go now. The Royal Academy *soirée* of 1870 was over, and the painter had to retire with the rest in a state of dejection that was quite abject. Was there ever such a fascinating charming woman? He began to build the most stupendous castles in the air. He must see her again; but how? He had failed even to get Mr. Hughes's town address, and he was under an engagement to leave London himself in a few days. Poor Frank! he was hard hit—he could not get over it. There was a significance too, he thought, about all the circumstances quite remark-

able; and they were, it must be admitted, sufficient to make a deep impression on the heart of a susceptible and sensitive young artist; and we all know how sensitive and susceptible artists are, both young and old.

III. THE PRIZE.

ONCE more the winter came round. The occupations of the interval had not diverted Frank's thoughts; he dreamt of his nymph of the woods day and night. But his despair was growing chronic, when the hope of seeing her again was revived early in the new year by the receipt of a letter from Mr. Hughes, requesting that he would make arrangements to go down to Hadenham to paint the portrait of another of his children. He went gladly of course, and once more by mid February had nearly completed his work. He had not dared to refer to Miss Dacres; his old timidity having again laid hold of him, he could not think of her without blushing. Mr. Hughes was the first to mention her.

'We are going to drive over to Lockhurst, Mr. Hilary,' he said one day at luncheon; 'there are a few good pictures there—you might be interested. By the way, you met Miss Dacres, I think. Of course, I remember; I introduced you at the Academy *soirée*. I don't know if she is at home, though, now.'

'Miss Dacres lives at Lockhurst, then?' inquired Frank.

'Yes, sometimes. She is very well off, and quite

independent. She goes about a good deal, but spends the most of her time with an old aunt at Lockhurst. I hope she is there now.'

And we may be sure Frank echoed that hope heartily.

It was realised. Miss Dacres was there, and renewed her acquaintance with Mr. Hilary cordially, if a little shyly; but his courage never forsook him, he found, when once in her presence. Her aunt was not well, and she had to do the honours. The pictures, however, were not of much importance, being principally the work of amateurs—sketches which Miss Dacres had got together from her friends, with here and there a purchase from a water-colour exhibition. They had been nearly all duly inspected, Frank making appropriate reference of course to Miss Dacres' own taste and skill in the art; and the party were passing along a corridor back to the drawing-room for afternoon tea, when the sight of an easel, through a half-open door, caught Hilary's attention.

'Your painting-room, Miss Dacres, I presume,' he cried, stopping, whilst Mr. Hughes and his two daughters, who were in advance, continued their way to the drawing-room. 'May I not be privileged to see what you are doing?'

'O, I have very little to show; but if you care to look, walk in.'

He did so, a step in advance of her. In an instant she shot by him like a rush of wind, and with a sweep of her arm rapidly drew a curtain across a little recess

or alcove; but Frank's eyes were quicker than her action: she was too late, for he had seen—what? Why, his picture, 'A Lady sketching,' &c., hanging on the wall, and side by side with it, as companion, his own portrait—'An Artist sketching,' &c.!

Covered with confusion and blushes, she stood convicted. Far too generous to take undue advantage, Hilary immediately turned to the work on the easel, and after a few unmeaning words of criticism he said, 'You are going to send this drawing to the Academy?'

'If I get it finished in time,' she answered, reddening a little.

'O, you must; it would never do for "Corisande Brown" not to be represented.'

'I think you are very unkind, Mr. Hilary.'

'Do you, then, behave in a Christian spirit—return good for evil; be kind to *me*.'

He hardly knew what he was saying, but he was very conscious of the truth of the axiom, 'Faint heart,' &c., and this consciousness swept all before it. He turned towards her.

'I have guessed this, hoped this, all along; that is, that you, Corisande Brown, and the purchaser of my picture, were one and the same person. I have had an intuitive conviction of it, a presentiment, Miss Dacres.'

'I don't believe in presentiments,' she answered, avoiding his eyes and going to the door. 'Tea is waiting.'

'O, pray stop one moment; at least you believe in St. Valentine; you said so at the Academy.'

'I said nothing of the kind.'

‘Ah, but you said the two pictures, our two pictures, would make a pair of Valentines, a “happy pair.” Accept the omen, Miss Dacres; there must be something in it. Why, to-day is the anniversary—to-day is the 14th; St. Valentine again, as I live! It is fate; we cannot fly in the face of fate when it thus decrees us both a chance in the lottery, and assures me that, if I win, I at least must do so with a priceless prize! Say that I may hope; and if the devotion of a life have any influence, you shall admit at least you have not drawn a blank.’

He had followed her to the door, and for one moment held her hand in his, and put it to his lips before she passed out, and led the way without a word to the drawing-room.

What need to detail the sequel to a scene like this? Clearly there could be but one. Ground thus broken, Frank Hilary's impetuous courage bore down all obstacles; and some months before the next anniversary of St. Valentine came round, the ‘happy pair’ were at work in the same studio.

‘Corisande Brown’ is still a frequent exhibitor. Frank often sits to her (he is very handsome), but she tells him he is by no means so steady a model as he was at that memorable time at Old Croyston.

‘Ah, I did not know you were looking at me then,’ he pleads, ‘and, by the bye, you have never told me how it was you managed to elude my eagle eye; I was looking everywhere for you the two following days.’

‘O, it was on the afternoon of St. Valentine's day

that I made my sketch of you,' answered Mrs. Hilary. 'I wanted to finish my sketch, and I was returning through the wilderness from lunching with old Lady Belpot, when I caught sight of you in the distance, and I determined to try and have a peep at what you were doing; so I made a great round, and came upon you from the other side of the copse, where you never looked. Of course it was very wrong of me; but I got quite close, so close that I could see your drawing. To my surprise, I beheld you were touching up, not a drawing of Croyston Towers, but a sketch of myself. I was piqued at your impertinence, and so, as you said afterwards, I took my revenge. I made a sketch of you, and crept away again, like the guilty creature that I was, in the gloom of the evening, without your once having had an idea of my presence. I was not near the place after that.'

'Well, all is fair in love and war,' answered Frank; 'we were both guilty creatures; it was tit for tat. You don't grumble, do you?'

'No, indeed,' answered his wife; 'for I feel that I, no less than you (as you say), have drawn a prize in St. Valentine's Lottery!'

COLLECTORS' TASTES AND ARTISTS'
PALETTES.

A PECULIAR circumstance, which it is not necessary here to explain, qualifies me more than most people for being a good listener; and I flatter myself I am one. Necessarily, therefore, I like talkers. Most of my friends are talkers, or, if they are not, they are the cause of talking in others, which serves my purpose as well.

In proof whereof I, not so very many years ago, overheard a mightily diverting colloquy and lecture, and which, instructive as it was, set at rest many a wondering which until this occasion had possessed me, whenever I frequented my favourite haunts the picture-galleries, a wondering not only about what became of the pictures when the exhibitions close (a great social problem, by the way), but about how people first began to buy pictures, what put the notion into their heads, and by what small and indirect beginnings our most noteworthy private collections have been brought together.

My old friend Peter Taunpitt, Esq., is now celebrated for the modern pictures which crowd his spacious dwellings in town and country. And it is alone from

my association with him, and the use I have made of my ears, that I have been enabled to understand how, from the most anti-artistic early surroundings, he has appeared to develop into a good judge, and to display the refined taste which his collection warrants us in believing he possesses. He is a type of thousands, I believe, of thousands who form the *clientèles* upon which that fraternity of middle-men called dealers exist and fatten. And, after all, as a listener I may be permitted to inquire, why should they not? They supply a want evidently, as, in my limited judgment, may be made plain by the following scene, at which I was accidentally present, soon after the picture-buying mania had seized upon Taunpitt.

I drop into luncheon with him, as is my habit occasionally. Beyond the *portière* and in the front dining-room, he is engaged in conversation with that eminent purveyor of art, Mr. Hobbema Knobb, whose voice I immediately recognise, and who always, as now, when airing his ideas, talks so loudly that nothing he utters can escape any ears within twenty yards. I take a seat in the adjoining room, where the meal is laid, and where my friend, I am told, will join me immediately; and thus involuntarily I assist at Knobb's lecture. Evidently he is just beginning it, for he says,

'Taste, my dear sir, is a commodity, a commodity just as marketable as hay and corn, or hides and tallow. Now, I deal in taste, and you, forgive my saying so, not meaning the expression offensively, require taste. What more reasonable than that you should come to

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tendency to an Hebraic lisp. Equally I knew Taunpitt to be a thin tall man in spectacles, with very thick white and black hair, mutton-chop whiskers, high shirt-collar, and sloping shoulders; having a sort of semi-clerical air, which was increased by his long black frock-coat and trousers, deliberate speech, and pedantic manner. Therefore, although in the adjoining room, I had no more difficulty in realising the appearance of the *dramatis personæ* than I had in listening to the dialogue.

‘Do I understand you, then, to imply,’ I heard Taunpitt say, as Knobb paused, ‘that you are not prepared to allow me as much for these pictures, which I propose to give to you in part payment for the Millais, as they cost me?’

‘O, dear, no!’ said the dealer; ‘why, some of them are hardly worth my taking away.’

‘What? Not this Sidney Cooper?’ went on Taunpitt. ‘Mr. Cooper, I believe, is an R.A., and, I was told, our first cattle-painter; and surely *his* works are valuable.’

‘Bah! my dear sir. Mr. Cooper never set eyes on that picture! If he had painted it, small though it is, I should have been glad to have given you 300*l.* for it: it is not worth 300 pence.’

‘Not painted by Mr. Cooper? Why, it is the gem of my collection!’ exclaimed Taunpitt. ‘I gave more money for that than for any picture on my walls; I gave 30*l.* for it.’

‘Yes, very likely; and that is a proof of what I

say. Had it been genuine, you would not have got it for 300*l*.'

'Indeed, I shall not accept that as a proof,' remonstrated the would-be connoisseur, with some warmth; 'perhaps it is only a proof that I have made a good bargain.'

'Ah! my dear sir, my dear sir,' continued Mr. Hobbema Knobb, in a pitying and half-patronising tone, 'forgive my saying so, but it is just what I tell you—you require education in these things. Discernment, the result of education; taste, the result of discernment. Now see here,' and I heard him walking across the room as if taking the picture to the window; 'if you had discernment and taste, you would know at a glance that those touches could never have been put on by a master's hand. The cows are badly drawn, the execution without quality; but for the present (forgive my saying so) you do not understand these things. So I will give you a proof that will be quite clear to you that it is a worthless copy. Mark! the signature (a forgery) is dated 1836. I turn the picture, and I see it is painted on a canvas manufactured and sold by Lechertier Barbe of Regent-street. Now Barbe, I know for a fact, was not in business in England at that time; he could not have sold the canvas to Mr. Cooper, or anybody, in 1836. Ergo, that is not a genuine date, but, like the picture, only the copy of one.'

This was an argument, which appealed directly to the commercial instincts of Peter Taunpitt, Esq. He saw that if Knobb spoke the truth he had been indeed

taken in, and reluctantly admitted that it was possible.

‘Undoubtedly,’ acquiesced the voluble dealer; ‘but never mind, this sort of thing is inevitable when one begins to cultivate taste. We must pay for our experience, and really for a gentleman of your wealth, what is twenty or thirty pounds more or less? When you have allowed me to place a few works by our leading artists on your walls, you will very soon begin to see what rubbish you have hitherto been buying, and you will wonder that you ever could admire these inferior productions. When your eye has become accustomed to the work of such men as Millais, Frith, Philip, Hook, Calderon, Marks, and the rest that you have seen at my gallery, you will discover, as I have said, how progressive a thing is taste. Look at us through life, look at our early acquisitions in the way of art, if we have a leaning that way. As boys, we admire at first the coarse and vulgar woodcuts, representing our theatrical heroes, in the “penny plain” and “twopence coloured” style, adding not unfrequently a little tinsel, copper foil, or silk and satin to their dresses and trimmings. By degrees we take to cutting out and collecting, from illustrated books and newspapers, a purer sort of engraving, and are contented with simple black and white, foregoing our aspirations after gaudy colour. As we attain to the dignity of rooms of our own, we frame a few steel engravings, perhaps ordinary impressions, a long while ‘after letters;’ then we become more fastidious, we must have proofs, nothing but

proof-copies will satisfy us, talking learnedly about the relative merits of "mezzotint" and "line." By and by we display our progress in the cultivation of taste, and will only endure specimens after the best masters. If our means enable us, by this time we think about acquiring a few good water-colours, and an odd oil or two, and even then we go on, gradually getting more and more exclusive as we grow critical. Where we were once contented with an original Lauder or Brooks, we must now have a Millais or a Rossetti; where we were contented with a Gastineau or a Harding, we must now have a Turner or a Boyce. Thus, I say, it is with those who have had the time, means, and inclination to indulge in the acquisition of works of art; but with you, my dear sir (and pray forgive my saying so), it is different. As I understand, you have only latterly been in a—in a—position to—to, you will not misunderstand me—you have, in short, hitherto had overwhelming business to attend to. Plunging, therefore, out of a world of commerce into one of æsthetics, you are naturally a little at fault; you have not had the time to create this taste for yourself; you are beginning to see that you can do nothing without it; you very wisely come to me to be supplied with it ready made.'

Taking advantage of the pause which followed this flow of eloquence, Mr. Taunpitt said, with some anxiety in his tone, 'Doubtless you are right, but the acquisition of such works as you suggest I should purchase involves a heavy outlay, it becomes a serious investment of capital.'

'Truly,' said Knobb, 'but a most admirable investment, one which in these days cannot be bettered. Buy in the right market, with taste (which I supply), and if you ever want to sell, you may make fifty or a hundred per cent profit; whereas, by frittering away contemptible sums on this sort of rubbish' (and I have no doubt Mr. Knobb glanced contemptuously round the walls, which I knew to be covered by Wardour-street art) 'you are absolutely throwing your money into the gutter. However, I will take the whole lot away, and see what I can allow you; meanwhile I will send home the Millais, the Hook, and the Calderon, and, with your permission, I will come round to-morrow and show you where they should be hung. May I ask your servant to fetch me a cab?' And so Mr. Hobbema Knobb departed.

'That fellow is a plausible humbug,' said my friend, coming into the room where I was sitting. 'I suppose you have heard what we were talking about, yet there is something in what he says, no doubt; but he'll *do* me, if I give him a chance. Still I think I am right to get the Millais and the Hook, don't you? But I am not sure about the Calderon. Who is Mr. Calderon? Will that be a safe investment, do you think?'

I replied that I knew Mr. Calderon by reputation, but being merely a listener, with no opinions of my own, I could not venture to express one on the wisdom of such a speculation. No, indeed, no opinions from me; statements I *may* make and inquiries, and I would

therefore inquire very modestly whether the antecedents of my friend do not closely resemble those of thousands who, as I before said, have now the reputation of connoisseurs in virtue of their fine collections of modern pictures. I need hardly say that I reveal no secrets ; I only happen to draw attention to facts when I describe Taunpitt, and say that since he had entered on the dangerous ocean of picture-buying, he had run on many a shoal and quicksand, and had been buffeted about by many an adverse gale. He was now only beginning to understand that, if he aspired to the reputation of a collector, he must expend far heavier sums on the hobby than he had ever contemplated. He saw that acquisitions made in Wardour-street of undoubted Michael Angelos and guaranteed Titians, or of Sidney Coopers and Clarkson Stanfields, at about an average of 15*l.* a-piece, could not lead to a satisfactory result. He was just beginning to learn that artists of reputation made handsome incomes, and had no difficulty in disposing of their pictures for large sums of money as fast as they could produce them.

When, after a while, he had made up his mind to go in for a better class of work, he was somewhat astonished at discovering it was not so easy always to obtain it. He was surprised moreover to find that nearly all the pictures from eminent hands were usually sold even long before they were exhibited. His self-importance was greatly shocked, as this truth dawned upon him one day at the Royal Academy, whither he had gone probably for the first time in his life,

a few months before the foregoing conversation took place.

As Mr. Knobb had delicately hinted, Peter Taunpitt, Esq., had been much occupied in business. Indeed in early life he had had a very hard fight for it, and had only achieved his present wealth through the most untiring industry over a period of thirty years. The commercial world of hides and tallow had not conduced to the development of artistic qualities, and his necessarily close application to business left him no time to think even of such matters; and it was not until a partnership in the firm had given him considerable leisure and more money that he bethought himself of what to do with either the one or the other. The blank walls, however, of his newly-purchased mansion in Great Ore-street suggested pictures; pictures, to his mind, suggested shop-windows; into these, therefore, he had begun to look, and had gone on, stage by stage, with obscure dealer after obscure dealer, bartering and exchanging his acquisitions at intervals, as he began to see the necessity of improving the quality of his collection. I was aware that through an advertisement put forth by that astute purveyor of art, Mr. Hobbema Knobb, inviting connoisseurs and collectors to inspect, at his gallery, his very fine collection of works by &c. &c., open from ten o'clock till dusk, admission by address card, Taunpitt had been led to seek his assistance. Meanwhile he had felt his dignity somewhat hurt at the thought that a dealer should be able to obtain the works of artists which were denied to him,

let him visit the Royal Academy as often as he might, and with any amount of money in his pockets. Nevertheless he had called in Berners-street, and the interview, part of which I overheard, was the result. Mr. Taunpitt had negotiated for the purchase of some important masterpieces, and Mr. Knobb was to accept, as I gleaned, in part payment, some of the mistakes of the collector's early ventures.

With the irresolution of a weak yet conceited and somewhat purse-proud man he could not bring himself in the early days of their acquaintance to put his affairs pictorial in the dealer's hands. Suspicious of his intentions, yet admitting the force of much that he had said, Taunpitt nevertheless had a hankering after that same disputed Sidney Cooper, and therefore withdrew it.

And I know to this day he keeps it locked up, not daring to expose his reputation for taste to a doubt; but nevertheless I believe secretly admiring the spurious production.

The celebrity of his collection at the present time is patent of course to the little world concerned in such matters. We all know what a good judge he is, and how his society is courted by artists, but we may not all know what a heavy percentage he has had to pay for that ready-made article called taste, supplied by Mr. Hobbema Knobb and his fellows. And is it, I would again gently inquire, so very wrong of these gentlemen to sell such a commodity when there is so great a demand for it? Do the artists suffer very seri-

ously in consequence ? or is it just possible that they are gainers in the long-run by the attempted education of the Taunpitts and other picture-buyers by such professors as Hobbema Knobb and his brethren ? .

THE SHADOW OF SHALLOW-MERE GAP.

A Story of the South Downs.

‘COME, my pretty gentleman, let me tell your fortune ! You are a fine good-looking darling, with your blue eyes and golden curly hair. You’d make a fair mate for the brown-haired maid that’s longing for you. Ah ! now do cross my hand with a bit of silver, and I’ll tell ye all the good fortune that waits ye ! Ah ! give the poor gipsy girl a sixpence, sir ! You’ll never miss it, and ye’ll be rewarded by and by ! Let me tell your fortune, sir !’

‘Don’t worry the gentleman, Madge—his fortune’s made. Here you are, sir—three sticks a penny. Come and have a turn with me, sir, at the dolls ; and I’ve got a lot of fine new cocoa-nuts. I can see you are a good shot, sir. Here—I’ll hold your horse. Joe, hold the gentleman’s stirrup.’

‘Don’t you have nothing to do with him, sir ; his nuts is all ollor. Try a turn with me—try a turn at the real original Aunt Sally. If you breaks the pipe, you has—’

‘Come and ring the bull, sir ! You pays me a shilling for six throws, and I gives you a shilling every time you pops the ring on a short horn, and sixpence every time you pops it on a long un.’

‘Try the pictur’ card, sir! It’s only a matter of heye against ’and. Try and catch the hemperor. There he is, you see, looking as bold as brass ; and I flings the three down, and it’s for you to say which on ’em he is. There ! I’ll lay five, ten, fifteen, or an even twen—’

‘Here, step it, Bill—’ere’s a Bobby.’ And the gipsy girl takes advantage of the commotion to renew her importunities to the gentleman on horseback who has been the object of these numerous invitations. He, however, resisting her gently, flings her a sixpence, and rides slowly away to a less frequented part of the course, where he remains for a considerable time unmolested. At length the gipsies again began to surround him ; and, although the races were not ended, Andrew Craith had had enough of them, and, tired of the noise and ribaldry of the scene, he turned his horse’s head towards the sea, seeking, amidst the solitudes of the surrounding downs, a quiet more in harmony with his frame of mind.

He had ridden over from Thelmstone, that huge watering-place on the English south coast—not because he took any interest in the sport going on upon the race-hill above the neighbouring county town of Clewes, but because he was endeavouring to distract his thoughts from dwelling too persistently on the one subject with which now for several days they had alone been occupied. Naturally this same preoccupying subject was very fair and graceful to look upon, especially as he had looked upon her from time to time, when

they had crossed each other's paths upon the esplanades and public walks of the fashionable Metropolis-on-Sea.


'Only a schoolgirl, after all,' he had said to himself, 'that I am making such a fuss about; yet, if I know anything of my own feelings, she is woman enough to occupy them to the end of my days; and get to know her somehow I certainly will.' Then he had laughed at his folly, and determined to overcome it. How could he, as a reasoning being, pretend that an utter stranger—whom he had only seen some half-dozen times, whose character, antecedents, and, indeed, whose very name were unknown to him—should be the one of all others fitted to make him happy for life? But the more he used this argument, the more unsatisfying did it seem; and, as he stood watching the doings amidst the crowd upon the race-ground, and still found his thoughts for ever drifting back to Thelmstone, and that nothing appeared to be substantial that was passing before him—that jockeys, horses, grand stand, betting-ring, spectators, all were as so many dreamy interruptions to the single reality upon which his mind was dwelling—he then and there finally gave up the effort, and abandoned himself helplessly, once for all, to the task of finding out who *she* was, and of laying some plan for making her acquaintance.

Thus pondering, he had scarcely noticed the direction his unguided horse was taking, and he could not even, when he afterwards tried, remember how long a

time had elapsed between his leaving the race-course and his finding himself slowly descending a narrow valley, or gap, amidst the downs leading to the sea, and up which the noise of the surf upon the shore was breaking in a low modulated cadence, or coming in fitful gusts as it was borne upon the evening breeze. For evening, too, had stolen upon him unawares, and a late October sunset was streaking the west with gold, and feebly trying to disperse a gathering mist, which shut out any sight of the ocean, and appeared to bar the farther end of the valley.

Andrew Craith was a stranger to the neighbourhood; but his acquaintance with hill and dale and mist and sea had dated from his birth, on the wild coast of Aberdeenshire, and although now here, hundreds of miles from his native land, he experienced a pleasurable sensation from the aspect of the scene. It seemed to remind him of his early days, and in the mood he was then he greeted it with the cordiality one does a stranger, who brings to mind forcibly by face and manners the look of an old friend.

The bleak open downs, with scarce a tree to be seen, save where a few clustered round a large but lonely farmstead at the head of the valley, the shelving slopes, or the abrupt precipitous chalk cliffs which formed one side of the gap, and merged into the face of the sea-front of the downs, were truly but mild substitutes for those characteristics which marked the desolate, granite-cragged, and iron-bound coast of his old home. Still there was an affinity, he felt, between the places—an



affinity which their mere remote likeness one to the other could not justify. Was it due to some mysterious influence under which he had but just fallen, and which he did not then even suspect? It may have been so. Certain it is that he gladly hailed the solitude and wildness of the spot; and as his horse gave signs of an intention to make for the stables of the farm, he urged him down the white and narrow rutted road which wound through the gap. Presently, at a turn in it, he came upon a broad sheet of water, occupying the whole width of the opening between the hills, except for a narrow space on one side, where the cart-track passed along it, and again disappeared round another bend at the farther extremity of the mere, which was long and irregular, its marge in many places reedy and shallow. The white cliff before mentioned rose perpendicularly out of the water for some hundred feet on the opposite side to that where ran the cart-road, and then sloped off in green turf gently to a much greater elevation, until it was lost in the undulations of the down against the ever-darkening sky.

Apparently struck by the peculiarity of the place, Andrew Craith reined in his horse when he had passed about half way along the accessible side of the sheet of water. To his right lay the steep but verdant side of the valley, to his left the lake and cliff, as it stretched away to the sea, a peep of which he could now just discern straight in front of him. As he gazed, however, he suddenly lost it, and a sea-fog, or mist, which had been hanging about in irregular masses, came swirling

up towards and down upon him from every side with such rapidity, that in a moment he found himself thickly enveloped in it.

The increasing darkness was of course rapidly accelerated by the fog, and he was about to turn his horse's head up the valley again, with the intention of retracing his way, when he was startled by the animal's resistance to the rein. The poor brute had broken out in a tremendous sweat ; he trembled violently, and, despite all his rider's efforts, seemed incapable of proceeding. Just as Andrew was debating what to do the fog lifted in the direction of the cliff, which now again stood out clear for a minute or two. But again the mist descended, and again partially rolled away, and as it did so this time, appeared to reflect in some extraordinary manner the warm tint from the setting sun, which was likewise slightly caught by the cliff itself, although Phœbus should, according to the light, have disappeared some quarter of an hour before. Puzzled and interested by this curious phenomenon, and disturbed by the behaviour of his horse, Andrew Craith became rapidly more perplexed, as he fancied he saw reflected upon the face of the cliff, through the thin veil of mist, the shadow of a human form. At first he could hardly believe his eyes, as upon the ghostly chalk a dark spot seemed gradually to enlarge, and to take the shape of a woman standing with uplifted arms. Her attitude was one of benediction, and something in the form of a hood was round her head, and a long cloak hanging from her shoulders hid the proportions of her figure. No face

was visible, no detail, in fact, of any kind, but merely a flat reflected shadow, such as may be seen in a child's 'galanty show,' or upon a sheet hung up at Christmas-time between the folding doors for the enactment of a shadow pantomime.

He had scarcely realised this effect, when again the thickening mist interposed, and shut the apparition from his view. Lifting again as rapidly, however, the shadow on the cliff still remained ; but this time it was moving, the arms waving gently to and fro. The 'cute reasoning faculty of the Scotchman, on such a subject as this phantasmagoria, was ready enough at his command ; it was only at fault in the matter which puts most men's reason at a disadvantage. The reality of love was more potent in its spell upon his brain than was any unreality amongst the mists. He immediately, but with the calmest deliberation, concluded that this effect was none other than one of those rather remarkable instances of refraction which are occasionally to be seen in misty hilly countries.

'Merely another spectre of the Brocken on a small scale,' he said to himself. 'It is some old gipsy tramp on a height between the setting sun and these vapours, and her form, by some curious juxtaposition is reflected upon them, and so on to the cliff, or on to the veil of mist in front of it. There are plenty of just such looking figures hanging about every race-meeting. Nay, have I not come across a score of such this afternoon ? That group by which I was surrounded when I tossed the girl a sixpence was made up of them.'

Thus he coolly settled it, to his perfect satisfaction. But why did the horse appear so frightened? Well, horses were not supposed to reason upon such things.

Yet, hark! What is that? and all his calculations are dispelled in a second, for, mingling with the never-ceasing sound of the sea, which alone interrupts the otherwise perfect silence, the tones of a woman's voice, singing some dirge-like strain away in the far distance, break upon his ear. At first almost a wail, it now seems to creep slowly nearer, as if coming over the hill above the cliff. As it does so, the words of the chant become audible, and straining his ears eagerly, Andrew Craith's blood runs cold, as he hears his own name uttered in the constantly-repeated refrain:

'Give your horse rein, and check him not,
He'll carry you straight to the trysting-spot,
For many a day, and many a year,
Craith shall be Craith of Shallow-Mere.

The brown-haired maid is within your reach,
Have you the wit to read my speech,
For many a day, and many a year,
Craith shall be Craith of Shallow-Mere.

And the kindly hand, put forth to save,
Shall be grasped by a son's ere it drop to the grave,
For many a day, and many a year,
Craith shall be Craith of Shallow-Mere.'

Then it dies away as it has approached, and there is not much more reasoning power left in the rider's brain than in his horse's.

The mists settle rapidly down upon earth and water.

The darkness is profound, and not a glimpse even of the white chalk road remains. To give his horse rein is, indeed, now all that is left for the traveller, and he shakes the bridle nervously. The animal turns quickly round, and, with his nose close to the ground, trots away as if perfectly sure of the road. Before Andrew has well realised what has passed, he is conscious that the farm at the head of the valley has been regained, and that a stable-boy, lantern in hand, is standing beside him. Voices from within the house inquiring who it is; a request from the rider that he may be shown the way back to the Clewes road; remonstrance from the master, who now comes forward, 'Scarcely possible to find the way in such a mist, and highly dangerous if possible.' An invitation to dismount and enter, at first declined, but, after some further parley, accepted gratefully. Led into the cosy oak-panelled parlour, glistening in the ruddy firelight, Andrew refers to the unusual incident, in these railway days, of a belated traveller losing his way, and seeking shelter under a stranger's roof.

'It is fit, sir,' he says, 'that I should at once, under such very peculiar circumstances, let you know who I am, and then, if you will allow me, I will endeavour to account for my somewhat disturbed and agitated manner. I have been much perplexed and even startled. Here is my card, with my London address, although I am at present engaged on some engineering work at Thelmsstone, where I am stay—'

But he does not finish the word, for his host, an

elderly gentleman, gives a slight start as he looks at the card, and breaks in, with much surprise,

‘Why, this is a curious coincidence, indeed! It seems I have to welcome a namesake, for, though my Christian name is certainly not Andrew, my grandfather and my father were both Andrew Craiths. Are we related, I wonder? The name is not common.’

‘Scarcely, I imagine,’ replies the guest, surprised on his part. ‘My family, such as it is, or rather was, is obscure enough; and I never had any connections in the south, or anywhere else, for the matter of that. Briefly, my father was but a fisherman of Peterhead; but, with the thrift of our race, he saved money enough before he died to give me a fair education, and start me as a civil engineer. I was an only child, and never knew or heard of another relative beside my parents. At their death I went to London (another characteristic, it is said, of my countrymen,’ he puts in, with a smile), ‘two years ago; and I don’t believe I have a single relation in the world.’

‘No? Then it is but a coincidence after all,’ admits the host; ‘for we here are Southerners born and bred amongst these downs, and, let me add, holders of this same farm for over two hundred years. Yes, the Shallow-Mere Farm has been tenanted by none other than the Craiths for more than that time; but, alas, sir, the race is coming to an end. I am its sole male representative. I have no son, and when I die,’ the old gentleman adds, with a sigh, ‘the place must perforce pass to another name. This is a source of great grief

to me. But come, sir, you look fatigued and pale, come into our dining-room and have a glass of wine. My wife will be—'

'Stay—pardon me,' says Andrew. 'Do you mind my just saying another word before we go? May I close the door?'

It is done, and they sit down, the guest continuing with agitation,

'This place, do I understand, is called Shallow-Mere?'

'Yes; from the piece of water in the gap; Shallow-Mere Gap, and this house Shallow-Mere Farm.'


'I have always thought I was rather wanting in another characteristic of my countrymen—I always thought I was not superstitious; but after what has passed within the last half-hour I can no longer believe it;' and Andrew Craith recounts minutely his singular experience on the margin of the mere. Whilst doing so, his host, in his turn, betrays agitation. When the narrative is finished he is as pale as death, and inquires,

'Two years ago, was it, do you say, that you came to the south? Can you remember about what time in the year?'

'Perfectly, for, strangely enough, it is exactly two years this very day since I first set foot in London.'

'More marvellous still!' proceeds the farmer. 'I never thought I was superstitious till now; but there must be something in it—something more in these links of connection than we can divine at present;'

and after a moment's musing, he adds, 'That woman's words impressed me at the time. See here, sir. These races take place annually, and of course bring to the neighbourhood all sorts of riff-raff—gipsies, tramps, and the like. Now, this same day two years ago, I had noticed an old gipsy woman hanging about the place, and, though I don't encourage begging, I gave her a trifle in the morning to help her on her way. In the evening, just before it was getting dark, I chanced to have occasion to go down to the 'shore, to see after the repair of a boat, and winding down the gap, as I came in sight of the Mere, I saw three figures standing somewhere about the place at which, I judge, you pulled up your horse. As I got nearer, I heard angry voices, and made out that there were two men bullying and swearing at this same old gipsy. They were endeavouring to get something out of her hand; and, seeing me approach, one of them suddenly dealt her a tremendous blow, and she fell into the Mere, whilst the two scoundrels made off at the top of their speed. I hastened to help the woman, for, though the water is very shallow, as its name implies, I saw she had fallen face downwards, and was lying with her head almost under it. I waded in, and lifted her up. She was quite insensible, and, I feared, dead. I raised an alarm, got assistance from some of my men, and we brought her up to the house. Life was not extinct, however, and with unremitting attention she was restored. The blow had merely stunned her; but she certainly would have been drowned but for my timely aid. She refused



all alms, much as we pressed them upon her. She slept in one of my barns, and next morning departed, calling down upon our house all manner of blessings. I was touched by the poor old creature's excess of gratitude, and walked out some little way with her. At the top of the road yonder she bade me farewell, took my hand, kissed it, called me her "pretty gentleman," and "preserver," and all with that air of mystery and prophecy which still lingers amongst this ancient nomadic race, for she was an unmistakable gipsy. Finally, muttering a lot of jargon, as she held my palm, she broke out into part of the identical chant which you, sir, have recounted as hearing whilst gazing at the strange appearance in the mist. "Remember," she said, "you may never see me again; but, whatever betide, your good deed will have its reward. I know your heart's wish. We can divine the thoughts of all who mean us well, never fear! Still,

‘For many a day, and many a year,
Craith shall be Craith of Shallow-Mere.’

That is your hope, and it will come about, little as you and little as I may see the way."

'Then we parted; but twice again, as she crossed the downs, before she was out of sight and hearing, she stopped, looked back towards me, raised her arms high above her head, and repeated, in her peculiar wailing voice, her prophecy. It is not, perhaps, strange that her words should have made some impression on me, when I remember how deeply cherished had been my

wish that this property should ever be held by one of my name. Nevertheless, I had almost forgotten the old gipsy and her mumblings (for I have never seen her since) until they were now vividly called to mind by your strange adventure.'

Host and guest alike are silent, both impressed. After farther expressions of surprise, they pass to the dining-room, where a substantial tea is invitingly spread, and Mrs. Craith, a handsome lady, and fit-looking mate for the gentleman farmer, welcomes the stranger namesake cordially, on being briefly told the circumstances which have brought him to the house. Then arises the question of how Thelmstone may again be reached that night. His host and hostess urge Andrew not to attempt it, and the former says half aside to his wife,

'It is out of the question; the fog will not lift till morning; and I told the fly-man even that he would have to stay all night, it will never be safe for him to drive back; I had been to the stable to settle about his staying just as Mr.—our namesake here, came up.'

'Do I understand,' breaks in Andrew, 'that there is a Thelmstone fly here?—then surely—'

'Impossible, my dear sir; it is a drive of over thirteen miles, and the way across the downs to the Clewes road from this farm—'

But Mr. Craith is interrupted by the opening of the door, and the entrance of a charming bright-eyed girl of some seventeen years. She hesitates, then bows slightly as the farmer says, 'O, here you are, Elsie! My daughter; this gentleman, Elsie, has been benighted

in the fog.' But turning as he speaks towards 'this gentleman,' he sees that he must be benighted by something more than fog at the present moment, for he stands with an expression of bewilderment mingled with pleasure and astonishment, so comical that the host, hesitating, begins to laugh, as he adds, 'Why, this is not another shadow, Mr. Craith! Elsie, at any rate, is very substantial. Is this a fresh coincidence? have you two met before?' and then, looking towards his daughter, he seems to find an answer in the affirmative by the slight blush which has sprung to her cheeks.

Yes! it was she, and none other—the fair preoccupying subject of Andrew's thoughts, the fair creature for an introduction to whom he had been devising all sorts of plans, stood before him. So part of the prophecy at least, then, was fulfilled,


'Give your horse rein, and check him not,
He'll carry you straight to the trysting-spot.'

These words were fresh in Andrew's memory, and he now saw their import and verification. Emboldened by his good fortune, it was not long ere he explained his interpretation of the couplet, and urged the possibility of the whole of the prediction being realised. He argued, not without a kind of superstitious awe in his manner, that the facts all pointed but to one solution. Here had he been seeking, like a knight-errant of old, for a clue that should lead him to the fulfilment of his

most anxious hopes, and lo! it had been put into his hands as by magic. Andrew had set his heart on making the acquaintance of, and possibly marrying, this pretty young schoolgirl, whose appearance had so fascinated him. She had been driven over from Thelmsstone in a fly to spend a three days' holiday at her home at the very time when *he*, a perfect stranger to the place and people, had been led by the most mysterious chance or influence to that very home. The strange coincidence of the names, the father's anxious wish that his property should still be held by a Craith—why, it would be flying in the face of fate—it would be outraging all the laws of destiny, if the gipsy's prophecy were not allowed to take its course!

And it did take its course. Within two years from that time, Elsie Craith changed her condition but not her name, and the young engineer, by his marriage, became the heir to the Shallow-Mere Farm estate—it would still belong to a Craith.

But the augur of all this good fortune? Her shadow yet fell fitfully across it. Not a few efforts were made to dispel or explain the mystery; but no inquiries were of any avail. The gipsy woman had never been seen in the neighbourhood since her rescue from death by the kind-hearted farmer; nor, for the matter of that, had her shadow; although many a time when the sea mist rolled up the gap and shrouded the chalky downs as it had done on that eventful October afternoon, and the sun was setting with the same lurid glow, both the Craiths had visited the spot, half-anticipating




a repetition or explanation of the spectral appearance. A superstitious feeling had been kindled in their hearts, though they would have fain denied it; for notwithstanding the behaviour of Andrew's horse in so readily seeking and finding the stable-gate of the farm could be accounted for, his trembling and sweating pointed to some uncanny influence. The animal, a regular old Thelmstone hack, which Andrew had hired to take him to the races, knew the country well, having frequently carried Elsie to her home, when, out for a canter across the downs, she, and some of her fellow pupils, under the escort of a riding-master, had made one of those cavalcades that form so conspicuous a feature of the adjacent fashionable watering-place. Nevertheless, there was an air of the supernatural clinging to all the circumstances, nor has the end quite dispelled it; the shadow of Shallow-Mere Gap has never been quite accounted for, in Andrew Craith's mind. The latent tendency to superstition, inherent in every Scotchman, had been aroused, and he continued to haunt the Mere at odd hours, whenever he and his wife were staying at the farm.

At length beneath its roof, one autumn afternoon, when the weather was strangely similar to that in which four years before he had first beheld it, a son was born to Andrew. The general happiness of the family seemed thus completed, and a farther inheritance of the property by a Craith secured, to the old man's infinite delight.

'Now,' thought Andrew, 'if indeed there be, as I

believe, some mysterious but goodly influence presiding over us, is the time for a farther sign of it.' And as dusk was falling, without saying a word to any one, he went straight away down to the Mere. Most propitious for his hopes, there was a heavy mist, as before, hanging over the hills. As before, the setting sun lent a parting glow to the atmosphere; as before, through the hushed silence of the place, there arose from the direction of the high white cliff the well-remembered, wailing, irregular chant. As it caught his ear, the sibyl-like shadow, faint at first, but gradually more distinct, appeared upon the veil of mist, hanging in front of the chalky height. It looked smaller, however, and was more shrunken and bent, whilst the voice was fainter and feebler, but the words were as clear as ever:

'For many a day, and many a year,
Craith shall be Craith of Shallow-Mere.
My rede is read
Ere my life be sped,
And the gipsy's words
Need bring no dread;
I've waited and watched
Till fate was fast,
And the gipsy's words
Prove true at last.
I'll come no more,
For my task is o'er,
And the grateful heart
Can now depart
In peace to the distant shore.
For many a day, and many a year,
Craith shall be Craith of Shallow-Mere.'



Then the mists closed thickly down, and Andrew, awe-struck but not surprised, found his way back to the farm. He said nothing that night, but early the next morning, when he was telling his father-in-law what he had seen and heard, a farm-labourer broke into the morning-room with much haste and trepidation, saying that as he and his mates were going to work they had caught sight of an object with something red about it lying in the Mere, just beneath the chalk cliff, and upon going down and wading across to it, they had found it to be none other than the poor old gipsy woman the master had so often inquired about. She lay there in the water stiff and dead, wrapped in her red cloak. The man appeared to think she must have fallen over the cliff in the fog, the previous night, for she was much cut and bruised.

Did this sad catastrophe, then, throw any light on the subject? Yes, to all but Andrew it was a sufficient and reasonable explanation. Most people who knew of the circumstances thought that the shadow was thus proved to have been a substance. Indeed, it was a great question if the substance, through the influence of the mists, had not been mistaken for the shadow from the first. But the hard-headed practical Scotch engineer was the only person, with the exception perhaps of his father-in-law, who refused to accept the solution. He had seen the figure, he maintained, upon the face of the cliff, and not above it, to say nothing of the prophecy and its fulfilment, and he declares to this

day that he believes all the good fortune and happiness which he now enjoys to be due to something more than the mere mumblings of an old gipsy woman.

She, he insists, was but an instrument.

SAUNTERS IN SCHWEITZ.

A RUSH to begin with, and then as slow as you please. London to Lucerne in thirty hours; Lucerne to Lauterbrunnen in thirty days.

That is our notion of the way to do it. Get on to the ground as quick as you can, and when *there*, saunter to your heart's content. If your time is limited, do not try and see everything, or dash over the mountains and along the lakes at the same pace that you have come across the plains. Ice is ice, passes are passes, peaks are peaks: find two or three of the best specimens, and enjoy them thoroughly, taking the rest for granted.

Well, then, at Lucerne, as a starting-point! A mightily altered place within these last five-and-twenty years—even within the last ten. That quarter of a century back, the Pension Aischmann (now Worley), with its extinguisher-topped tower at the corner, hard by the foot of the old covered bridge, and the Gasthaus zum Schwan, were the chief hostelryes for the tourist; and, save for a week or two at the height of the season, supplied ample accommodation for that ubiquitous biped. At the present time, with the Englischer Hof, the Schweitzer Hof, the Lucerner Hof, the Hôtel Na-

embosom the waters of the lake, with its reaches and inlets. These, as of yore, reflect at times the beauties in which they are framed ; and the region of eternal snow peeps up in the distance, cloud-capped and mist-wreathed, in all its old fantastic, grand, and awe-inspiring forms.


What matters, then, a house or two, more or less, or new bridges and railways ? They are lost in the vastness directly we get a mile away, and are no more thought of on the marge of the glacier or precipice than are the office and the desk, or the cares and the business we have left behind. Suppose there are three or four extra steamers of the American saloon pattern, and huge by comparison with the *Dampfschiff* ('Stadt Basel,' or 'Stadt Berne') of former days, puffing their pigmy way along the bay of Uri, or that there is a newly-made diligence-road running along the perpendicular cliffs by the side of Tell's chapel, or that a new hotel has sprung up adjacent to that apocryphal shrine, the magnitude and splendour of the opposite bank, and the reaches of the lake, are not lessened, but only made the more easily accessible and enjoyable ; and it will still be quite possible, till the eye becomes accustomed to and the mind is enabled to grasp the magnitude of the scale on which Nature has worked hereabouts, to mistake a group of white chalets perched up on some far-off ridge for a herd of goats or sheep.

The saunterer need not complain of the increased number of halting-places ; they only help him to stop the oftener, and take in the more. And because a rail-

road is to wriggle up the St. Gothard pass, and plunge into the bowels of the earth just above Wesen, ignoring the Devil's Bridge and the rest of the mighty gullies and fissures, until on the Italian side it sees daylight again at Airoldò, he need not travel by it; it is still open to him to wander along the old highway; and in such regions locomotive and train will appear so insignificant, that if he be but only sufficiently interested in cliff and torrent, and alp and precipice, he will hardly notice them.

Flueln, swampy and marshy; Altorff, picturesque and legend-haunted; Amsteg, precipitous and zigzag; Wesen, Swiss and pastoral; Devil's Bridge, weird and awful; Andermatt and Hospenthal, bleak and desolate;—a long time will elapse before man will be capable of lessening any one of these their characteristics, or of defacing materially the district in which they lie. Nay, he may for a long time continue his saunterings in such places with little fear of the features which attract him deteriorating. He will be able to drop over into Italy, with its vines and chestnuts and olives, by the St. Gothard, or keep among the northern slopes of the Alps, by descending the Furca. This, as our subject is Schweitz, *we* do, and tremble as we do it, for the brain of our friend grows dizzy, and the pavement of Pall-mall or Piccadilly is but ill training-ground for a saunter by the summit of the Rhône glacier.

We are not climbers in the Alpine Club sense of the word, far from it; and though in our time we have managed our Gemmi and Grimsel, our Wengern Alp



and Æggisch-horn, we profess to be nothing but saunterers at the best—saunterers along beaten tracks and easy highways—venturing to think that in these regions they will ever afford for people of moderate aspirations sufficient change from Fleet-street or Cheapside.

Ten years ago the Furca was but a mule pass; and although the road has now been widened, shaped, and diverted for the passage of vehicles, it is doubtful whether it is not even more impressive and nervous-making than when on a narrower scale. An awful ledge—a mere unparapeted crumbling scratch with a penknife, as it seems—upon the shoulder of the mountain is our path, when, at the highest point, we travel for a mile or two upon a level, past the bare inhospitable-looking inn—the inn taken for her Majesty for a week, and where she slept for three nights, during her visit to Switzerland a few years back. But it is as we turn towards the first bend—when, if the weather be but favourable, the whole of the Rhône valley is spread out like a map—that the sense of vastness becomes overwhelming. Then man may feel indeed his insignificance, and what a mere speck and atom he is. Probably he may be more impressed with this sensation when scaling the Jung Frau or Matterhorn; but, for the saunterer, this gives a very fair taste of it.

Zigzagging down, close alongside of that gigantic Rhône glacier, with its ghostly green forests of ice pinnacles, fantastic in shape, mighty in scale, now crowded together, now wide apart, now toppling forward, now backward, now to this side, then to that,

cringing, towering, falling over, or hustling each other, until, gradually flattening out, fan-shaped, with tremendous waves and frightful cracks, it reaches by degrees its lower level, over against the Rhône Glacier Hotel—zigzagging down this road, we say, is enough to wake up the novice in Swiss travel.

Not wonderful that he is appalled, and clutches our arm nervously; for he is now beginning to know how this or that patch upon the hill-side, which from the valley he took to be a stone or two surrounded by brushwood, is in reality a mighty boulder, huge as St. Paul's, and that the greenery is simply an extensive pine forest. He is learning how to distinguish goats from châteaux, and to appreciate the scale of things. He has found out how long it takes to reach a certain little patch of snow, which he thought when he first saw it was about five minutes off, and about five feet wide, and he has been rather staggered to discover the five minutes and the five feet extended to fifty. In short, he is getting acquainted with the mountains, and the introduction has frightened him. He was not prepared, by his previous intimacy with Primrose-hill or Snow-hill, to find them quite so big.

Sitting comfortably smoking his pipe after dinner, and gazing forth, say from Lucerne across the placid waters at the verdant slopes fringing the opposite banks, he has talked about pulling across to them, and just running up and down their inviting sides for a little exercise before turning in; and he has laughed at our suggestion that the lake was two or three miles across,

and even that these little hills would take him some hours to ascend.

Familiar facts all these, of course, to the practised tourist; but every year sees a host of untravelled, inexperienced folk looking forth, for the first time, upon the marvels of the world of ice and snow; and assuredly the one predominating result of their earliest acquaintance with the Alps must be wonder at their vastness. There is nothing like it; no sensation like it; but it takes time, and the experience of a big pass or two, to realise it. The mere sight of that Rhône valley, in making the descent of the Simplon or Furca, when it is fully taken in, and the distance comprehended, must inevitably leave an indelible impression upon any mind less malleable than granite. Lucky are those who have the brain to grasp and enjoy it all, and yet not grow dizzy.

Vertes, or vertigo, or whatever it may be called, becomes a veritable disease in certain temperaments. It may be compared to sea-sickness, and, like that malady, is insurmountable in some cases, despite any custom or practice. Where it has once taken firm hold, a mountaineer, no more than a sailor, can be made. A vague terror, even horror, will arise at the mere mention of a great height, just as the bare thought of a sea-voyage conjures up the feeling which the actual pitching and tossing produces. Give your novice, then, the best chance of escaping from a too confirmed attack of this dire calamity. Train him gently to a comprehension of what he has to face; introduce him to your tall friends

gradually; take him a quiet saunter or two, to begin with, over the merest hillocks—such, for instance, as those by the lake he thought so little of on first beholding; and do not whisk him rashly from Furnival's Inn to the Furca Inn before he has had time to get accustomed to the change. No, nor even 'ascend' him too suddenly by a well-parapeted broad highway, if it lie amidst gloomy ravines, topped by snow-peaks and based by roaring torrents.

Drop a naturally nervous man, without a warning, as it were, on to such a spot as the middle of the coach-road through the Simplon gorge of Gondo, or by the corner of a zigzag hard by the St. Gothard Devil's Bridge, and the chances are you will do for him for ever. He will never face precipice or awkward ridge after that, any more than a timid child will face the water if you have thrown him ruthlessly headlong in by way of introduction to that element.

Climbers and swimmers will seldom be made from such beginnings. Nay, by thoughtless measures of this sort you may even put the enjoyment of our mode of sauntering, as you may the mildest kind of bathing, entirely out of the reach of hosts of people to whom both experiences should be welcome and wholesome.

Well-nigh had this been the case with ourselves the other day. That unprotected road by the Rhône glacier had very nearly done for us; and we had all but declined the ascent of the Æggisch-horn, when, after a halt at Viesch, we reached the mountain inn, half-way up, and found it smothered with clouds. Yet, the next

day, what a sight we should have missed ! for the summit of this little Alp, this mere ten-thousand footer, yields the saunterer a pretty good prospect of the wonders he has come to see. That sweep of the Aletsch glacier, that peep into the gloomy depths of the ice-bound, iceberged, mysterious Marjelen sea, with—‘ save the mark ! ’—a cockle-shell of a boat just launched upon its treacherous waters, are alone well worth the toil, given but the head and legs to stand it. The going up from out that cloud around the inn ; the sudden clearing of the mist, with its equally sudden return ; the momentary glimpse, between its rifts, first of a valley-village, with its tiny church lying in the morning sunlight, six thousand feet below, and then of a dark mass of beetling rock, snow be-patched and forbidding-looking, just overhead ; the clamber across loose earth and jutting crag ; the trudge through melting ice and banked-up snow ; and the final rest amidst those curiously-detached but immovable masses of stone upon the tip-top, where all at last, by degrees, has become bright unclouded sunlight—form an experience well within the reach of the able-bodied saunterer, who has not been startled from his self-possession—an experience which should be gone through if a tour in Schweitz be made for the purpose of learning what the country is like.

Still, there be those by the hundred who content themselves with time-killing in luxurious hotels by the margins of the lakes, who never do anything more than eat, drink, and idle in the questionable atmosphere of

such a hostelry as the Beau Rivage at Ouchy, with its sumptuous *tables d'hôte*, its gorgeous *salons*, its terraces and fountains, its hothouse-like gardens, its broad flights of steps, its boatings and bathings, its band, its illuminations, its drop-scene-like effects of mountain and moonlight, and, above all, its fast-and-loose gorgeously-bedizened company. English, American, German, Russian, Italian, and French all come thither, and swagger and lounge, and get themselves up, and talk loud, and finally go away believing, and endeavouring to make their friends believe, they have been to Switzerland. Bah! As well spend a holiday at the Cremorne Hotel!

Now and then, for a day or two maybe, you shall come across some few gray-coated moths amongst the gorgeous butterflies who are on their way to and from the mountains, taking this as a resting-place, and as just a thing to see—as just a thing to show—how many-sided a beast is your human being, and as a proof that there be other wonders to be found in this land than those of peak and pass.

What an edifying spectacle, to wit, is yonder Frenchman, five feet five of stature and fifty inches of girth, fantastic of costume, smooth of chin, and marvellous as to moustache, partaking of his breakfast *à sept plats* at a little round table under the trees! He is enjoying Switzerland thoroughly; but then, look you, he is a man of adventure, according to his own account—one who has done his Alps and deserves his repose. He does not say, however, *how* he did them; he does not

tell the listening group of Boulevard *flâneurs* that he was carried in those identical patent-leather shoes and green-striped socks by two sturdy Schweitzers, in a *chaise à porteur*, over every bit of ground that a horse could not travel. The sight of him now, we suggest, is instructive ; but it is nothing to what we learned as we saw him traversing the fearful Wengern Alp by the above-mentioned means. Truly, travellers see strange sights !

Thus there are saunterers and saunterers ; but it is not of the Beau Rivage class that we esteem ourselves, being only there through the perversity of circumstances. This overcome, we have sauntered back to the mountains by way of Fribourg, Berne, and Thun. A pretty good round, when the passage of the Grimsel would have taken us from Viesch to Grindelwald, as a native guide put it, 'ein Augenblick.'

Never mind. Eye-blinks are for the go-ahead tourist, not for saunterers ; and, if we choose to get to Grindelwald from the Æggisch-horn by simply following the Rhône from its glacier to its lake, past Brieg, through its torrent-devastated dreary valley to Seon, Martigny, Vevay, Villeneuve, and Lausanne, and thence by Fribourg, Berne, Thun, and Interlachen, who shall say us nay ! We have only extended experience and enjoyment.

Nothing very new to be said about Grindelwald, 'immutable' being writ large all round. It is true the great glacier is receding considerably here, as in the case of that of the Rhône ; but probably for the next

five or ten thousand years we may calculate on its remaining sufficiently like the one or two descriptions that have already been set down about it. For the same reason, Murray may be relied upon with regard to Lauterbrunnen, even to the constant recurrence of Alpine accidents, fortunately not all of so dire a nature as that which befell the three ill-starred adventurers in July 1871, two of whom lost their lives in an avalanche from off the treacherous Jung Frau.

The burial of Bischoff, the well-known guide, in the tiny churchyard beneath the shadow of the very mountain which had cost him his existence, was an event picturesque indeed, but sadly tragic. And yet, as it had to be, the saunterer may be glad to have witnessed it.

The long, square, black, box-like coffin, with its coped lid, borne by the hands of villagers, and followed by the heart-stricken widow in her Bernese costume of brown stuff, black-lace cap, white sleeves, black stomacher and apron, an infant at her breast, and five other fatherless old-fashioned-looking little children, one above another, clinging to their mother's skirts, and peeping into the grave as she pointed to the 'dust returning to dust;' the whole district turning out, peasants, men and women, in their quaint Sunday best, looking sadly unfunereal, and forming, with their gay umbrellas, bright patches of colour, and having walked many a steep mile from neighbouring villages and mountain châteaux to pay their last tribute of respect to their departed friend; the sympathising knots of

tourists and visitors ; the good pastor's touching voice ; the tinkling bell from out the quaint church turret ; the roar of the Staubbach and the other falls which abound on all sides ; the ravines and precipices, the mighty snow-clad peaks, shutting the valley in ; and over the whole a solemn sky, with rifts and gleams and swirling restless clouds—made up a scene not easily to be forgotten. Fitting commentary too, perhaps, it may have been upon that reckless daring which prompts man to set up his pigmy will against the ruthless forces of Nature.

‘ You English are chiefly responsible for these accidents,’ pronounced a kind-hearted but somewhat officious Swiss burgher, as we sauntered back to the inn. ‘ You started the fashion of ascending dangerous peaks, and by so doing have encouraged the natives and others to constant life-risking. The skill some of your countrymen display in climbing is not given to all ; and though this poor fellow was equal to anything man might attempt, being married and having a family, it was not right to tempt him into danger. With these views, I am going to ask every Englishman here, in Lauterbrunnen, to subscribe liberally for the widow and children.’

‘ By all means,’ we answered ; ‘ but surely we bring prosperity to certain classes hereabouts as a set-off ? And in getting up your subscription, don't forget to apply to the hotel-keepers. To our poor thinking, they don't do all they might for our comfort. Where will you see, save in this land of liberty, equality, and fra-

ternity, such misery, squalor, and poverty? Where such beggary and beggars? It may be safely calculated that the English spend not much less than a hundred thousand a year in Switzerland at the present day; and yet the tourist's path is obstructed in every direction, and frequently his whole enjoyment of the magnificent scenery spoiled, by the importunities of just as many miserable cripples and *crétins*, with their revolting *goîtres* and deformed limbs, as he might have met twenty or thirty years ago. Would it not be as well if *Messieurs* our hosts, with an eye to the equality clause in the principles of their government, were to divide some of their spoils with these poor misérables, or at least take steps to make some provision for them, instead of allowing them to live upon the blackmail they levy upon the tourist? Thus much by the way; but it applies equally to the case of this poor guide's family. The hotel-keepers, and those who benefit largely by the travelling English, should be equally liable, with the English themselves, for the assistance needed.'

The Schweitzer could not say much to this, and, as he took our mite, declared our words should not go unheeded.

Back to Paris, with another rush, to more 'Liberté, égalité, fraternité;' back to see the fat French mountaineer, gorging himself this time at the Grand Véfour with a fifteen-franc dinner, fully conscious doubtless, with his experiences gleaned in the model republic, of the great advantage of the three leading principles of

such institutions. Any leaning towards them that he may have had before his saunter in Schweitz must have been confirmed while there. Breakfasting, dining, and living generally upon the scale that appears to be his habit, he cannot fail to have been struck by their admirable consistency. He must have acknowledged the glorious effects of liberty, as he was called upon for his passport in crossing the frontiers of his own country; he must have been thoroughly sensible of his equality with the two sturdy Schweitzers as they carried him over the Wengern Alp; and he must have felt quite like their own brother if he chanced to witness them eating their black sour bread, with rancid gruyère and garlic.

Without question, he will give his fellow-deputies the benefit of his researches; he will point out how the division of land in Switzerland into small plots leads to the growing of crops so magnificent as to be scarce worth the garnering; how the universal wealth and prosperity of the lower classes mark the beneficent character of Republican rule; and how it is incumbent therefore on every patriotic Frenchman to continue carving and placarding the three magic words on Notre Dame, and the one or two other public edifices which the great high-priests of socialism have spared from the petroleumistic enforcing of their principles.

He will do all this, and we will saunter home, more than ever convinced of the absurdity of hoping for equality on this earth; striving our utmost for contentment with the lot in which our lives are cast;

endeavouring to improve it only by steady industry and perseverance, and taking care that any efforts we make in our own behalf shall at least not injure others, even if they do not benefit them.

A PLEA FOR THE PAINTERS.

AMONGST the many grumbings to which Englishmen are proverbially addicted, there are none perhaps more unreasonable than those in which they indulge at a modern exhibition of pictures.

It is a favourite field on which they may display unbounded discontent, and they seldom fail to avail themselves of any opportunity which the shortcomings of the artists may afford them for exercising their favourite hobby; they seldom fail to attack these unlucky wights at all points, but the one vulnerable spot at which they are never tired of lunging is the tendency of many painters to repeat themselves, to depict, year after year, subjects similar in all respects in feeling, sentiment, and treatment.

These grumbling critics will assert, in the most injured tone, that they require no catalogue, that they know by whom certain pictures are painted the moment they stand before them; and appear to forget that this very specialty, in the majority of cases, is the cause of the artist's celebrity, and that it is, after all, the very quality most to be admired in his work; he does oftenest that which he can do best, that which he can do probably better than any one else.

Who looks, for instance, for anything but cattle, horses, and dogs from Sidney Cooper and Ansdell ; or for anything but nymphs, dryads, and hamadryads from Frost ; for anything but Cavaliers, Roundheads, Christmas merry-makings, or gorgeous ceremonials from Gilbert ; where can we expect to find more fascinating portrayals of Surrey and Kentish landscape than in the works of Vicat Cole ? Can quaint and humorous mediævalism have a more able exponent than Stacey Marks ? and surely the Pamela-esque beauties of the last century would have been thoroughly content to leave the record of their personal attractions in the hands of George Leslie.

Therefore we repeat that the grumbler is without reason when he complains that he knows the canvases of these gentlemen, and those of many more that could be named, the moment he sees them, and that he is utterly wrong in holding up their marked characteristics for reprobation : they are characteristics by which they have justly won their spurs. And pretty nearly the same thing may be said of all the noteworthy painters of the modern British school, both in oil and water-colour. The handwriting as it were by which they have become celebrated must have very considerable merit in it, even though it always harp on one theme ; it is not a little to have established it as a recognisable and worthy cognisance. The very greatest genius alone can make a name by any other means ; the daring leaders, who, conscious of their own power, can commit themselves to untried strategy with

certainty of success. Even they, however, after a time, are recognisable in their different manners; and they would be scarcely human, if they did not most frequently indulge in that one which wins them the greatest renown.

Hook is one of these notably; he has had three distinct manners since he has been conspicuous, his Italian, his pastoral, and his marine, but discovering that his real and greatest strength lay in the latter, what wonder that he is prone to adhere to it? The public too in some measure is responsible, for if it now and then murmurs at his tendency to repeat himself, it would murmur more if he suddenly took to a totally different and unrecognisable manner; and since an artist must live, however much he may feel inclined at times to dally with new themes (as the true artist will ever feel inclined), he must perforce restrain himself if his bread depend upon the sale of his canvases.

Millais, again, has, more than any man of genius, displayed an astounding versatility. He can paint nearly anything, but perhaps his portraits are, after all, his finest efforts.

It is the most difficult branch of art with which he deals the most successfully, and hence we see him all but entirely giving himself up to it. We cannot, however, predict that he will continue a portrait-painter; he is sure some day to do something quite unexpected and new. He is one of those painters from whom we may always look for a surprise, and about whose pictures we can never make a prophecy; but then he and

the very few of whom the like may be said (notably Frederick Walker,* who, despite many technical faults in drawing, is certain to display some unanticipated creative power) are the startlingly original geniuses, and no one can calculate the flights to which they will soar. But only with these great generals of the army of Art lies this faculty, and it would be unreasonable to expect geniuses to make up the rank and file of a battalion. Plumes, stars, and medals cannot be distributed or deserved broadcast; the private soldiers, the steady-going shoulder-to-shoulder men, on whom the brunt of the battle falls, can scarcely be decorated with much more than their own serviceable well-worn uniforms, ever honourable to their wearers, and amply decorative.

When, therefore, we hear our painters thoughtlessly accused of monotony, we always feel impelled to say, 'Perhaps, but the monotony is only individual, whereas, despite the excellences of the Continental schools' (and concerning which so much is always made by the grumbling critics to whom we refer), 'the monotony there is, broadly speaking, universal.' The training of the artist abroad is superb, his *mécanique* is faultless, but we suggest it has a tendency to make all men use their brush, that is, to paint too much after the same fashion. The *modus operandi* being identical, shall not the handwriting all look alike? The sentences vary, of course, but the copy has been set by the same writing-master.

Now, as an example, it may be remembered that in

* Written some years before his death.

the Exhibition of the Royal Academy in 1872 there happened to be two pictures representing the same subject, viz. 'Charles the First leaving Westminster Hall' after sentence of death had been passed upon him, the one painted by Sir John Gilbert, A.R.A., and the other by Mr. L. J. Pott. Had these gentlemen been either Frenchmen or Belgians, the curious coincidence of their both painting the same subject would have been more striking than it was, for however much the colour, composition, and delineation of the characters in the scene might have varied, there would have been nothing like the distinct individuality that existed in their respective handling. Hence we see matter rather for congratulation than censure in this same individuality of manner, and we would applaud our artists for their independence of academic and scholastic training, and for displaying their self-reliance as much at the easel as in the camp, the court, or the mart.

Although attacking them chiefly for being always the same, the querulous grumbler, as we have hinted, nevertheless never misses any other spot of vantage whence he can cast a stone at the painters. At this season, when picture exhibitions are in the ascendant, it is particularly curious to observe with what malicious glee he enters on his self-constituted task. What is there about a painted canvas that it should raise his ire so readily? why should it act like a red rag upon him, and induce him often to utter sentiments which, if analysed, would lead one to suppose that nothing short of the artist's blood would satisfy his critic's great

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revenge? In nine cases out of ten this inimical being is really quite incompetent to form anything like a sound judgment as to the merits of a work of art, yet he does not hesitate to pronounce his verdict with a finality that would lead you to suppose that painting (practical and theoretical) had been the one absorbing study of his life. In truth, his opinion at best will be really thoughtless and superficial, and more often than not flippant and presumptuous also. On matters which he has not given his attention to, studied and trained himself to understand, he is usually quite modest and deferring, he confesses his ignorance; but once before a picture his tone is very different, as though painting were a thing that anybody could comprehend at a glance. Occasionally, however, he will concede a point, but he does so with the air of a man who nevertheless believes himself to be a shrewd sort of fellow. There is that in his tone which is as much as to say, 'I know you think I don't know anything about it, and it isn't worth my while to undeceive you, but I flatter myself it is not such a difficult question, after all, as you suppose;' so he says aloud, 'I don't profess to be a judge' (and his manner belies his words), 'but I know what I like, and I don't like *that*.'

The contemptuous wave of the hand by which he is supposed to dismiss at once the picture under discussion being probably applied to a work which has demanded from its producer untold hours of deep anxiety, intense thought, untiring study, and unswerving application. Critics of this stamp are, on the other

hand, extraordinarily open to the influence of name and prestige, and it is they who will take the opinion of their favourite journal as a guide in preference to any other, forgetting probably, whilst they diligently mark their catalogues from the *Times* notice, that not unfrequently its writer is but little better acquainted with, or competent to give an opinion upon, the subject than they are themselves.

‘O! this is what the *Times* says we ought to look at,’ is a frequent remark to be overheard by any attentive listener at a Royal Academy Exhibition; and it is not unfrequently followed by a doubtful inquiry, ‘Shall I put a mark against it?’ Then, again, ‘Ah! that’s a nice picture—who is it by? O, I see, Mudger. Ah, he’s not an Academician. Um’ (after a pause), ‘don’t think much of it.’

The absence of the magic initials has entirely done for poor Mudger; whilst Scorp, whose large picture occupies twelve feet of the line, comes in for a share of the critic’s admiration, in consequence of the conspicuous R.A. following the painter’s name, and because the newspaper article, written probably by an intimate friend of Scorp’s, awards it high consideration. And these are the people, forsooth! who will tell you ‘they are so fond of pictures!’ these are the people who at least ‘know what they like,’ as they never fail to inform you. By what means they are gradually to be weaned from this overbearing and loudly expressed confidence in themselves it is not easy to say; how they are to be brought to understand that art is a very serious and

difficult study, without some devotion to which they are really not in a position to do much more when in front of a picture than to look at and respectfully accept the artist's interpretation of the theme as the result of his utmost efforts, it is equally difficult to determine.

Familiarity with the best examples may in time do much to educate the populace, but it is to be feared it will not inculcate largely that good taste which (on other matters than art) restrains sensitive and delicate-minded people from 'holding forth' upon subjects which they do not understand. The schoolmaster, with his 'extra' for good manners, rather than the artist, has this task before him; meanwhile it is as well thus lightly to analyse some of the commonest twaddle which is talked in picture-galleries; and perhaps, by constantly holding it up for the ridicule and reprobation of the intelligent part of the community, to beget a little more reverence and modesty in its utterers; for that it emanates solely from the uneducated or lower orders, as they are called, must not be for a moment supposed; the major part of it comes oftentimes from the very best dressed people in the rooms, and we know that they are always keenly sensitive to ridicule.

If they were only aware with what supreme contempt their opinions are regarded by artists and all true lovers and judges of art, whatever they might think, they would at least be less ready to give their 'worst of thoughts, their worst of words.'

Still, poor folks! even if they lay such axioms as these which we presume to give them to their hearts, and strive to act upon them, they must be sorely puzzled, and think that there is some justification for the unbridled license of their tongues, when they come to find modern English painting, with but few exceptions, broadly and sweepingly denounced as worthless and hopeless by such a high authority as the *Quarterly Review*.

Yet, once again, they must pause to remember that, however much we may dissent from the views expressed by the writer of the 'State of English Painting,' we can but respect the serious manner in which he deals with the subject. The tone of the article is quite that which should be brought to bear on so grave a theme; it has no affinity whatever with the flippant and superficial condemnations to which we have been referring, and is as superior to the ordinary run of picture reviews as the novels of Sir Walter Scott are to those of the 'penny horrors.'

As it could be wished that the compilers of the latter would sit more reverently at the feet of the great Wizard of the North, so equally it could be wished that the professional art critic even would take a leaf out of the *Quarterly Reviewer's* article in respect to the reverence of the tone in which he advances his views. We should then perhaps escape some of that flippancy of style which the daily press reviewers of pictures think it incumbent on them to assume; for it may be safely asserted that, in their way, they say quite as

many stupid, misleading, ignorant things as can be overheard amongst the crowd in the galleries. Their comments are frequently as impertinent and presumptuous, and doing, of course, greater harm, as written words will ever do more than spoken ones. The avidity with which they fall foul of the painters looks very much as if Jack Phœbus in *Lothair* was right, when he said that the critics were 'the men who had failed in literature and art;' for if the poor 'marler' is not wrong in one way he is in another. If he can paint and draw decently, his subjects are pronounced execrable; or if he be accredited with poetic feeling and sentiment, the reviewers find him guilty of villanous incapacity in the rudiments of anatomy or colour. In no way can he please them completely, in no way do they seem inclined to award him praise which is not qualified by the discovery of some overwhelming fault; in no way will they ever allow that he may possibly know more about what he has been thinking over and working diligently at for many months, than they who take in the result, as they conceive, at a glance.

Why, we humbly inquire, should the critic assume that his function necessarily leads him to look for blemishes before beauties, and when found, so to magnify them as to leave scarce a line's space for the record of the latter? Can it be that the painters are generally inimical to literary men? that they have offered them some serious and mysterious slight in remote ages, and that consequently the penmen are influenced by the axiom laid down by Colonel Henry Esmond,

‘that a kindness or a slight puts a man under one flag or the other, and that he marches with it to the end of the campaign’?

Only by some such solution can the unabated fury with which more than a few writers attack the painters’ work be accounted for, and it may be that this is also the final cause of the querulous grumbling criticisms of the newspaper-educated public, and against which we principally put in this ‘Plea for the Painters.’

In concluding, we will ask one more question. Would these complainants desire that, rather than find the well-known artists ‘always the same,’ as the phrase goes, they should change parts one with another—that Pettie should come out as a cattle and landscape painter, setting up his easel in Kentish hay-fields or on highland hill-sides, whilst Vicat Cole made his canvases glow with vivid presentments of flags of truce and forlorn maidens seeking ‘Sanctuary’?

Would it satisfy the grumblers to see a picture of sirens, or nude goddesses, by E. W. Cooke; and would they experience pleasurable emotion, on turning to their catalogue, to discover that Leighton had limned for them a wreck on the Goodwin Sands?

In truth, we doubt it, desirable as versatility may be; and we fear, as was hinted on starting, that save in the case of the rarest geniuses, the ‘cobbler must stick to his last,’ and that it is not well ‘to mock him for his black thumbs.’

DEED FOR DEED.

The Romance of a Holiday.

EDITORIAL NOTE.

SHE to whom the following letters were written is my sister.

‘Read them,’ said she, when we met last Christmas. ‘The events narrated may be of use to you, in your magazine work: being facts they may serve as a basis for fiction, for they are quite as strange. Or,’ and here the young person infused a tone of sarcasm into her words, ‘if you are *too busy* to write a story, just edit the letters, as you would say—alter the names of places and people, so as not to be personal, and by a little curtailing and dovetailing you will turn out a very readable romance.’

I adopt her latter suggestion, not of course for the reason she implied, but because the letters, although merely giving the outline of a tale, make it complete as far as it goes.

When I have premised, therefore, that these records came from an old schoolfellow of my sister’s, who married a great friend of mine, it only remains for me to produce such parts of them as, in their order, recount this romance of a holiday.

The Anchor Inn, Malt Regis,
Taxminster, Devon, Aug. 23, 1873.

RAIN, rain, nothing but rain and wind, my dear Celia; and this is the fourth day since the wreck, which happened, as I told you in my last, the very evening we arrived. George is becoming desperate. He declares he would return to London to-night if there were any sort of conveyance at hand by which he could, in such weather, get to the station. I don't know how to pacify him. He is pacing the room like a wild animal, alternately flattening his nose against the little bow-window of our sitting-room, flinging himself on to the hard horsehair sofa in despair, smoking innumerable pipes, and uttering strong language.

Of course I refrain from twitting him with the absurdity of this idea of his of spending his holiday in a rural fishing village, fourteen miles from any railway, instead of going, like a rational creature, to a pleasant, cheerful watering-place, where there would be something to see and people to talk to. It would be mean of me to take advantage of the opportunity the bad weather gives me of laying any stress now upon the folly of his proceeding; it must be sufficiently plain to him without any words of mine. So, like an affectionate wife, I hold my tongue. He wanted quiet, and he has it.

By a stroke of good fortune, I have hit upon an occupation for him since writing the above, and he is now happy and amused.

'Why don't you read one of these novels?' said I.

'There's a large choice in this box we brought from Mudie's.'

'Pooh!' he replied. 'I hate novels! Parcel of bosh; the invention of a lot of fictitious people and events, which one is asked to interest oneself in as if they were real! I'd as lief try to write a story as read one. In fact, I'd a deuced deal rather, if I could.'

'Why don't you try?'

'Because I've no fancy, or imagination, or invention. I never know what to say, even in a letter (except upon business), now that I've done writing love-nonsense to you.'

'Well, but you need not invent. A plain statement of facts, sometimes, is a story in itself; and allow me, sir, to say that there are quite as many romantic facts, if one has but the wit to set them down, going on constantly all around us as are to be found in the wildest scribblings of the novelist. Record, for instance, what you saw during the first twenty-four hours of our arrival here, and you have at any rate the opening of a good story.'

'Done with you, then! Upon my life, it was the most stirring scene I ever assisted at! I really will try and perpetuate it with the pen.' And down he sat at the table.

'Good boy!' said I. 'Mind, no exaggeration; simply what came under your own eye.'

Briefly, this is the sort of conversation, much abridged, which resulted in George's writing the enclosed. Take it as the postscript to my letter; and cer-

tainly in this case it will prove the truth of the adage, which says that in that afterthought lies the pith of a woman's correspondence. Let me hear soon what you think of it, and all news, and believe me your affectionate friend,

L——.

Postscript.

No sooner had we been welcomed by the landlord of the one decent inn at Malt Regis, where I had secured rooms, than he urged me to ascend the steep path at the rear of the house to the top of the cliffs, where, some way along, a curious cleft in their edge formed a sort of natural look-out. Hastily telling me that a brig had, within the last two hours, gone ashore, and that he was anxious to know how it fared with her and the crew, he said, 'Yonder, at Monkey's Grip, we can see what's going on. Come with me, sir, and I'll show you the way.'

I followed, of course, only too glad that, since a wreck had happened, I at any rate was in time to witness it. A quarter of an hour of steep climbing up the western side of the valley in which the village lay brought us to the spot indicated.

A wild scene of boiling breakers lies before us. The white spray, as it is hurled high into the air at every moment from off an ugly reef of rock, mingles with the leaden gray of the tearing storm-clouds, which, in conjunction with the fierce wind, produces, until the eye becomes accustomed to it, the effect of a veil or gauze curtain, such as, on the stage, is often lowered when supernatural or mysterious appearances are represented.

Then, after long staring, the dazed sight descries some details. An iron-bound coast—iron in colour, savage in form—grim and menacing cliffs and jutting headlands right and left—the first impression one of exceeding dreariness, if not of terror, hardly attractive to a confirmed Londoner seeking a pleasant seaside retreat.

The hour is that of sunset, as indicated by a lurid tone which, penetrating the leaden pall of the sky, gives additional weirdness to the outlook. But, viewed from the cliffs on which I stand, the sentiment of terror referred to is derived from the human element in the scene.

A little crowd of men and women—the whole population of the village, I imagine—is gathered on the shore below. Great excitement prevails amongst them as they eagerly regard what has hitherto escaped my notice. At the end of the spit or reef of rocks I can at length distinguish, by steady watching, part of a mast and cross-trees, and, lashed or clinging to it, a human figure.

Scarcely another remnant of the wreck is visible, only here and there patches of it drifting to leeward. The mast, however, is jammed under a sort of pinnacle of rock, of which there are several similar ones at intervals of a few yards all along the reef, and which, jutting high above the rough plain from which they rise, have the appearance of a jagged row of monstrous teeth. In all, the distance from the land to the outermost point is under two hundred yards; but the exces-

sive ruggedness of the reef and the swirling of the waves, as they break and crash across it, preclude the idea of any passage along the irregular surface being possible for the lonely creature upon the mast.

He is clear above the sea, and only now and then, when an access of water drives over the rocks, is he completely cut off from the mainland. Yet, exhausted as he probably is, although he ever and anon waves his arm encouragingly, he dares not, evidently, relinquish his position and trust to the perilous foothold by which alone he might, with good luck, be able to reach the land. My guide, the landlord, explains this situation to me, otherwise I might not clearly take it in, new as I am to such experiences, but now I do thoroughly; and, therefore, when I see a sturdy fisher-fellow, without his hat and clad only in his tight-fitting blue jersey and trousers, emerging from the crowd and begin to scramble forward over the nearest masses of rock, and when I see that a rope is attached to his waist, I know that it is his intention to try and rescue the man on the mast.

Intense excitement prevails in the little knot of people, as, cat-like, he creeps along the jagged ridge, sheltering himself now and again from the weltering waters under each succeeding pinnacle, and making desperate dashes from one to the other, as the recoiling of the waves leaves the intervals comparatively clear. At length, he has reached the last but one; there is a terrible mass of spray now surging over all at this point, and for several minutes his success seems very

doubtful ; nay, it is impossible, except by glimpses, to distinguish him at all.

What I really see of the act after this is next to nothing ; the man has disappeared from the mast, and only am I sure that the two have not been washed away together when I behold the one, carrying the other, emerging from under the lee of a pinnacle more than half-way back to the shore. The danger is not over, however, even here, for the ugliest dip in the line of rock has yet to be passed, and terrible, evidently, is the anxiety among the crowd, as, for a time, which seems interminable, the two wait and wait for an opportunity to cross it.

It is done at last, however, and, amidst a rush forward to meet them, and a murmuring cheer, which I hear rising above the din of sea and wind, the rescuer and the rescued stand safe amidst the people on the beach.

Malt Regis, Sept. 1, 1873.

MY DEAR CELIA,—Although I have had no answer to my letter, written about ten days ago, I can't resist scribbling to you again, for the strangest continuation that I could have imagined possible of that story—the beginning of which formed George's postscript—has been going on under my very eyes.

Whether there will be a conclusion to it, whilst we are staying at this out-of-the-way place, I know not ; but hitherto the events have succeeded each other so coherently, and are of so romantic a character, that it really seems as if I had been reading them in one of

Mr. Mudie's volumes, and that George and myself had become novelists and readers at one and the same time.

It was very provoking, but no sooner had the weather moderated a little, and only four days after George had seen the rescue, he got a telegram from that horrid office, recalling him to town for at least a week, on unexpected business.

Of course we shared the excitement the gallant deed had caused. The poor man who was saved at such imminent peril proved to be a Spanish-American—a native of Cuba, I believe, and one of the handsomest fellows that I ever beheld. It was only on the following morning that I could realise this, for when he was brought, half drowned, to our little inn, it was nearly dark, and he was so surrounded by the population that he was hidden from my view as I watched the crowd from the bow-window of our sitting-room.

When George, the next day, pointed him out, slowly walking down to the beach, he was still an object of great interest, especially amongst the wives and daughters of the fishermen, a little knot of whom were talking with him, and seemingly anxious to render him every assistance; for he was evidently still weak and exhausted from long exposure to wet and cold. One of the most attentive was a girl who, from her exceeding good looks, I have noticed more than once about the place. Now, there was something in her behaviour towards the man that, from the first moment I saw them together, gave me an idea, in-

stinctively, that she was, as the old women say, setting her cap at him. You know how quick our sex is to jump to these sorts of conclusions, and how right we often prove; *I* was, in this case, for, three days later, when *I* was taking a stroll by myself after George's departure, *I* saw them walking alone together, arm-in-arm, on the top of the cliff; and, this morning, *I* have been the unintentional witness of a scene which leaves no doubt on the question. *I* will try and describe it.

You may guess that being quite alone here is not the most exciting thing in the world; and so, to shorten the time as much as possible, *I* have taken up my old fancy for sketching; and though *I* am no great hand at it, it helps one through the day. The outline of the cliffs here is very beautiful, and from just beyond that part of the beach where the fishing-boats are hauled up there is a good view of them. So there *I* settled myself, this morning, under the shelter of a sort of old boathouse, or workshop, where the fishermen store their nets, and so forth. The doors, facing seawards, were open, and just within sat a man quietly mending his net. As *I* passed he looked up, and *I* recognised the face of the brave fellow who had gone out along the reef of rocks at the risk of his own life and saved the young American. *I* had never seen him so close before, and when the sound of my footsteps on the loose shingle caused him to raise his eyes eagerly, the idea crossed my mind that he was expecting somebody, and was disappointed at seeing a stranger. *I* should have liked to talk to him a little, for, naturally, he was

an object of equal interest now with the man he had saved ; but there was that about his manner, as he re-applied himself to his netting, and over which he had paused as I approached, that forbade my addressing him. So I went to the farther side of the shed, sitting with my back against it, and began my sketch.

I can hardly say how long I had been drawing, but certainly not an hour, when I found myself overhearing a conversation that was going on just inside the shed. Something in the tone of the speakers, rather than in the words, it was that first attracted my attention, and irresistibly held it. I had no intention of playing the eavesdropper, and I could scarcely expect that anything very confidential was about to take place.

As near as possible, however, this is what I overheard, as I gradually became conscious that I was listening—the voice, deep and melodious, of a man saying, ‘I’d been hoping you might a’ coom’d down to me, girl, all the morning. Knowing I’d be so busy, I thought mother might ha’ got ye to bring me a snack to save my going home ; but I ’spected ye an hour ago, and now you come empty-handed.’

‘I’d no thought o’ coming at all,’ was the answer, in tones I immediately recognised as those of the rustic beauty above referred to. ‘I was going away to father’s boat yonder to fetch his knife for him, which he left in the locker last night when he came ashore ; but, as you beckoned me, and seemed to have something to say, I came this little bit out of my road ; but now, as you only seem inclined to scold me, I’ll bid ye good-bye !’

'Nay, I'm not for scolding of ye, girl; it's not for that! Ye might know by this time as I'd never scold ye; I was only a-hoping—' There was a pause.

'Well! you was hoping what? That I should sit down by you, for you to sit and stare at me in that strange way you do, and say never a word for ever so long? I like for a man to talk to me when he's looking, and tell me something to make me laugh; but you, Joe, you're always as grave as the minister!'

'That may be because I'm a-mostly thinking of you, and because I'm sorry sometimes for to see how ye take up wi' chaps; how you've took up now with him as I went and picked off the mast. Belike he's a good man enough, but you don't know nothing at all about him, although he does say he was the skipper, and will make it worth all our whiles for to have saved him. But there! when I think of a-seeing you with him walking on the tops yonder, Nance, it made me feel that cruel and wicked that I wished I'd let him bide and be drowned.'

'Well, that is a nice thing to say surely,' responded the girl, 'and you, too, who make such a talk about wishing folks well, and going to chapel, and all that. The man is nothing to me—or if he is, it's no business of yours.'

'No business of mine, girl? When I as have seen ye grow up to the bright winsome queen you be, and would many a time before now have asked ye to be my wife, if I c'd ha' thought— But there!— I say, Nance!—and I could tell the speaker rose, and that

the two were now standing on the threshold of the shed — ‘I say, Nance, I can’t stave it off no longer—I can’t bear for to see you along o’ that chap, and I just put it to ye for the first and last time, Will ye ha’ me for a husband? Ye might ha’ know’d I’d loved ye these years past, and only my fear of your “No” kept me silent. Now that ’Merican forces me to speak once for all. Will ye have me?’

There was no answer. I rose from my sketching-seat; good feeling forbade my hearing more.

In the anxiety to get out of ear-shot, and hardly knowing which way to go, I went hastily round by the back to the other side of the shed, where, running higher on to the beach, was a group of fishing-boats, and from the shelter of which I could get almost the same view of my subject as from the spot I had just left.

To my surprise, I was no sooner resettled than I discovered that the tender interview had had another auditor besides myself; nay, was still not only being overheard, but watched, for who should be standing looking through the gap which the large open door of the shed made at its hinges but the American! He was evidently deeply absorbed, and, after a minute or two, he suddenly turned on his heel, made an angry gesture to himself, as it were, with his raised fist, and passed up towards the village within a few paces of where I sat, but apparently utterly unconscious of my presence, for his eyes were bent moodily upon the ground.

How he came to be playing the eavesdropper signifies little ; but my private opinion is, that it was, as in the case of myself, accidental. There is something too noble and straightforward in the aspect of the man to warrant any other conclusion. I believe he was simply following the girl, whom he had seen going towards her father's boat, and was arrested on the threshold of the shed as he was passing by, seeing that she had turned in there, and by the voices he had chanced to hear within. Likewise it matters little how much more he had heard or seen than I. Quite enough had certainly taken place to sow the seeds of a profound jealousy between him and his preserver.

I am prevented from writing more by George's return. The dog-cart that has brought him from the station is slowly descending the deep village street. I shall tell him the progress his story has made, and get him to write any continuation of it that may happen henceforth ; and I will take care that you shall have it to read. Meanwhile

I am always

Your affectionate friend,

L——.

After what my wife told me, I determined, on my return to Malt Regis, to keep a sharp eye on events. For days and days, however, nothing occurred to help my story-telling powers ; but I spent some of my idle time in finding out a little about the characters concerned. The American, to wit, I had a long talk to.

He, by name Luis Lopez, was, as represented, the master of the brig that had, with all hands save himself, been lost.

‘You see, sir,’ said he when I first spoke to him in the taproom of our little inn, where he had been staying since the wreck, ‘I have wired the whole affair to my owners’ agents at Bristol from your town of Taxminster. They do not reply; but, as luckily it has coincided that I had my ready dollars about me on that awkward evening, I ain’t so hard up as might be, and I shall not conclude to go hence till I get orders.’

I thought this sufficiently absurd. For a man in his position not to make straight away to the port to which he was originally bound was against all precedent in such emergencies; yet, after what my wife told me, was there not an explanation for his excuse? And, although I had never chanced upon him in company with the object that was undoubtedly inducing him to linger in these parts, I did see him, three or four evenings ago, waiting very suspiciously at the stile on the cliff path, where my wife had met him more than once walking with the girl Nancy Behring.

That same night, too, after having exchanged a word or two with him, I strolled a long distance up the valley inland, and the moon was shining nearly as bright as day by the time I was returning along the high-road from Taxminster. About a mile out of Malt Regis I overtook two figures walking under the shadow of one of the tall hedges, so conspicuous a feature of these Devonshire lanes. Quite suddenly they emerged

into the light at my approach: one was Nancy, the other *not* the American, but his preserver, Joseph Masters.

‘A fast-and-loose game it is that this young person is playing,’ thought I; ‘but I suppose so remarkable a beauty as hers demands some latitude: she will not waste all its sweetness in one quarter.’ A very pretty girl, certainly: tall, shapely, her small head poised exquisitely on her shoulders, and with a carriage like a duchess—like a Spanish duchess, shall I say?—for she has the complexion which Shakespeare calls ‘the sable livery of the burnished sun.’ Dark hair in great profusion, eyes darker still, with a depth and yet a coquettishness in them, unmistakable in its import. Her mouth, too, for ever disclosing brilliant teeth, indicates, by its curve of proud satisfaction as one looks admiringly at her, that such glances are as necessary to her existence as the air she breathes. Seldom to be met with as such rare qualities are amidst a purely agricultural and fishing population, they perhaps strike one the more on that account, and exercise an equal effect generally on the neighbouring swains. Not wonderful, then, that the heads of Joseph Masters and the American were turned. The wonder was that the heads of all the male population had not been well-nigh twisted off, or, at any rate, that one had not been thrust into the noose irrevocably. How such a girl had remained unmarried was astonishing. Joe seemed, however, to mean business now, and I felt glad that so fine and brave a fellow should, at least as far as looks went, find

so comely a mate. Yet, as to her disposition and character—well, there might be doubts on that head.

When I reached the turning into the cliff path, which made a short cut down to the village, I paused, looked back, and saw the two following on in the moonlight. Having gained the stile, actually at the edge of the cliff, where two hours before I had left Lopez, I paused again, and rested on it. Somewhat to my disturbance, in a minute I discovered him lying down on the grass within a few feet of me, evidently still waiting. 'Very awkward, indeed, this,' I thought, 'if they come along here together, instead of going by the road.' But there at the turning, after a little parley, fortunately they parted, Masters keeping to the road, and the girl coming along the path to the stile. I moved aside to let her get over it, and, as I watched her tripping lightly down the cliff-side, Lopez rose and hastily followed her. I, too, descended the same way to the inn, but without seeing them again that night; for it was late, and the whole village was well-nigh abed.

Fifteen days later, the first of October, indeed, and the old bad weather has returned. I am glad that another week brings my holiday to an end—the last, too, I ever mean to spend in this fashion. I wanted quiet, certainly; but I did not mean to be forced by sheer *ennui* into this sort of penmanship.

Joseph Masters is out at sea trawling, with his three partners in the boat, and it has come on to blow furiously and suddenly. Many other boats are out,

and, as the day closes, there is some anxiety for their safety.

Little groups of the women, the old men, and children begin to cluster at every vantage-point of outlook. Master Lopez is still at Malt Regis, and I find him, in company with two old fishermen and a little girl, sheltering from the wind in the cleft on the top of the cliffs, called 'Monkey's Grip,' the identical spot whence I had beheld his rescue six weeks back.

Scene, weather, light very much as they were then, and, save that the days are shorter by an hour and a half, it might be the same evening. I join the little party; they are watching the boats, which one by one are rounding the western headland and that fatal reef, and are getting beached, after the usual rope, horse, and windlass method of the place.

'There bean't no more to coom now, 'cept my nephew, Joe Masters,' said the old man, who held the little girl by the hand. 'I'd like to see him, I reckon, pretty soon now, else he wun't save the daylight; and the Lord knows what'll become of him such a night as this if he don't!'

'Are you sure that he's the only one due at this moment?' asked the American, with a peculiar expression in his voice and eye; 'are you sure, positive, that he has not come in?'

'Why, bless my heart alive! d'ye think I've lived here, man and boy, seventy years, and don't know the cut of every boat as well at sea as on the beach? I tell'ee he have not come.'

‘Humph!’ said Lopez, with a shrug, and with the same queer expression; ‘then I guess he’ll find it awkward, p’raps, when he does.’

‘Ay, man, that he will,’ interposed the other fisherman, in a lower tone, and plucking at the sleeve of the last speaker; ‘but you han’t no call to talk of it in that way. It’s a matter o’ life and death with they poor chaps. Don’t ye see,’ he went on, jerking his thumb towards the old man and the child, who had moved a pace or two forward as they gazed eagerly seawards—‘don’t ye see little Bess is fit to cry her eyes out because she can’t see her uncle’s boat? He’s been better nor a father to her since she lost her’n, off them reefs; and the old man—old Tom we call him—is fit to pipe his eye, too, at the thoughts of what may come.’

‘Wal, I’m sorry for their feelings,’ was the American’s answer; ‘but facts are facts, and I was only speaking to them. The facts are just what I say: Joseph Masters will find it awkward if he does not round that point before dark.’

‘My friend,’ said I, breaking in here, ‘you *do* seem to talk too lightly of this matter. You seem to forget that if it had not been for Joe Masters you would not be standing here at this moment.’

Luis Lopez turned his dark handsome face upon me with such a look as I don’t wish often to evoke from any man, as he replied:

‘No, sir, I do not forget that fact, whatever I may seem to do. No, sir, that is another fact I am prepared to speak to; and it may be lucky for some people that

I am so prepared: I wish I was not—that's the difficulty. I wish I could wipe it out.' And in a minute or two he walked slowly away from us along the cliff.

'Such is jealousy,' thought I, 'raising a wild fury in that man's breast against his preserver. I suppose none but the very highest natures can override such impulses.'

I lingered with the two old men about the spot for another half-hour, until nearly all the light had faded out of the wild sky. No other boat had hove in sight.

We returned in silence to the village street, where it debouched upon the beach. A heavy grief was over us—upon me as well as those more nearly concerned.

I had reëntered our quarters, was chatting with my wife on the sadness of the circumstance, and giving vent to no very friendly thoughts about the American, when a commotion and shout in the street, below our window, made me go out again.

There was a rush of every one towards the beach, and to that part of it where I had seen the whole population gathered on my first arrival at Malt Regis—the land end of the reef of rocks, whence the people had been watching the 'man upon the mast.'

The cry now went up that they had made out Joe Masters' boat, but that, deceived in distance by the approach of darkness, he had not given himself sea-room enough, and was in imminent peril of striking on the rocks. I could barely discern through the dim twilight anything but weltering waves and surf at the furthest point. But the trained eyes saw more,

and I knew by the gasps and mutterings, and, finally, by the awe-stricken shouts of the men and the wailing screams of the women, the progress of events and their termination. The worst had come; the boat had been seen to dash herself upon the jagged ridge, to lift herself once or twice farther on to it, and, then, heel over and disappear.

‘A long light rope, light and stout!’ shouted a voice which I recognised, rising above the din of crowd, and wind, and sea. ‘I know the way—no man better—and I’ll go; he did it for me, and I’ll be even with him, deed for deed. Yes, sir, I’ll wipe it out now,’ said the American, turning fiercely upon me as he pushed past in the crowd, the crowd half urging him on, half dissuading; some entreating for the contemplated deed, and some against it.

He went, and he achieved his purpose: picked Joe Masters out of the boiling surf upon the end of the reef, where, clinging to the mast and remnants of the boat as it had temporarily jammed under the lee of the outermost pinnacles of rock, the young fisherman was dimly discerned lying in precisely similar peril to that from which he had himself rescued the man who, by a strange coincidence, was now to rescue him. Almost identically, step by step, was the feat accomplished, the same danger incurred, the same doubts, hopes, and fears expressing themselves amidst the on-lookers, the same shelterings under the pinnacles, the same runs from one to the other, as the swirling of the boiling waves to and fro gave opportunities; and, finally, the

same shouts of gratulation when the two men, with merely their relative positions changed, stood safe upon the beach again.

'Who can ever doubt,' thought I, after this, 'that history repeats herself?' and when, in the course of the next half-hour, I was talking of the American to my wife, it was with very different feelings from those I had lately expressed. Still I felt that a climax had yet to be reached: this double service of one towards the other, which ought to hold two men, if anything would, in an indestructible bond of friendship, would go for nothing all the while the question of the woman was at issue between them. Therefore, to my thinking, Lopez had not saved his rival to befriend him. I thought I saw in the deed merely a sort of swaggering pride, a desire to wipe out the obligation and to pay back life with life, and then dispute to the death for the possession of the girl.

An interval of a few days set matters outwardly in their humdrum state again at Malt Regis. The recent events were much talked of, of course, and much grief prevailed for the two poor fellows who were out with Joe and were lost. My wife and I had by this time so mixed ourselves up with the interests of these honest fisher-folk that I oftentimes knew more of their affairs than met the eye. And thus it fell out that I came to be in a position to do some service to the two men whose deeds had formed the 'romance of our holiday.'

'You see, mate, I shouldn't like the whole of our

village for to know as we two was angered with one another; it wouldn't seem natural-like for two men as have done by each other what we have to be having high words; and if you want to parley any more about this here question, why, you'd best come up to Monkey's Grip this evening about six o'clock. I shall be coming back from Durdale Bay along the tops when I've seen to my lobster-pots; and nobody won't know nothing about what we say up there.'

'Good!' was the reply. 'Done with you! But I guess you don't mistake me. What I've done I've done for the sake o' fair play, nothin' else. We can consider ourselves equals now, which being so, it's for the best man to win. The difficulty could be soon wiped out if we was in my country; a brace of six-shoot—'

'Don't threaten, mate, I bean't used to that; and whether we are in one country or t'other, I reckon, if ye mean for to settle it so, we should be as ready *here* as there, though maybe we are more used to fists than knives, and that like. You've done fair by me all through, and I bean't going to doubt ye now. So, up yonder, this evening, I'll stand face to face with ye, no fear! But don't say no more about it now; they'll be overhearing of us.'

One, at least, had already overheard—that one was I—had overheard enough to leave no doubt of what had passed before I chanced upon the two men. They were alone in the little taproom, the door of which stood ajar at the foot of the back-stairs of our inn.

I often went out that way, and had been arrested

on this occasion by the voices in altercation. I had paused for a minute on the lower stair involuntarily, and as the men came forth into the passage, with the last words on their lips, I hastily retreated up-stairs again, making known immediately to my wife the suspicion which the scrap of conversation had aroused.

'We must prevent that meeting,' said she, 'or sad work will follow;' and when I answered, 'Yes; but how?' I confess my heart misgave me.

Six was the time; it would be nearly dark. If I was to avert the impending mischief, I must be on the spot before the men could meet. Judge, then, of my distress when I say that at five minutes to six that evening nearly half a mile of steep down lay between me and Monkey's Grip.

No matter, at present, what had kept me back; I must hurry forward at the top of my speed, and save two brave-hearted human beings from acting like savage wild animals.

Up the narrow, winding lane from the rear of the village, then, I flew; between the high hedges and over the deep-rutted ground to where the lane became a track and the track a sheep-path. Across the turf I sprang, as if I were a boy again at 'hare and hounds,' sometimes taking at a bound intercepting gorse-bushes, and sometimes scrambling through them, regardless of all save the agony of anxiety to reach the place. I dreaded to think what I might see as it came in sight; I dreaded even more to think that I might see nothing; for, being hard upon the edge of the cliff, if a struggle


took place there, it would be but too likely that both antagonists would topple headlong over.

Some sunset was lingering in the west as I gained the uppermost ridge of land, and then at last, clear before me, at not more than a hundred paces off, coming clear out against the evening light, were two forms swaying backwards and forwards, horribly close to the cliff edge. Half a minute more and I was upon them, as, with their hands at each other's throat, and with mad and furious glances in their eyes, the one was endeavouring to hurl the other to the ground, to the beach beneath, to death, by some means.

'Fools!' I cried, seizing hold of their arms, and striving to pull them away from that perilous edge, 'do you know what you are fighting for? Listen to me—listen to me, I implore you!' But I might as well have implored the dull earth, which was resounding with the heavy thud of their feet, as these men, blinded as they were by the brutal fury of jealousy—these two men, God help them! of all others, at such a pass!

For many moments they appeared quite unconscious of my presence; and as I clung to them, for ever beseeching them to listen, I likewise was swayed, more than once, perilously near the abyss; and it is a marvel, as I think back at the glimpse I had several times of the shore below, that we did not all three go over the cliff.

At length I contrived, by getting a hand into the breast of the American's jacket, and by a desperate wrench, to pull them both to the ground, falling also



myself, but managing to regain my balance in time to kneel between them ere they had recovered from the shock; and then I cried out, as I partly held them down, 'Do you know, you madmen, that this woman, who has turned you into fiends, has gone—has run away this very morning with the man they call the Squire's son, young Baines? that she cares for neither of you? that she is utterly unworthy of your thoughts? Will you believe me if I tell you,' I went on, in a calmer tone, seeing that I had partly gained their attention—'will you believe me that, after playing fast and loose with both of you, she cared for neither? that even this morning, after she had spent an hour and more with you, Luis Lopez, and after telling you, as I have no doubt she did, that she cared nothing for this man, Masters, that she went straight off to him at his boat-house, and probably told the same tale there, and then, finally, she met young Baines, who was waiting for her in a fly by the foot of the new bridge, and that they both then drove to the station, and went together by the afternoon train to London? Yes,' I continued rapidly, 'in consequence of something my wife had heard, I was enabled to trace her step by step; and I can bring half a dozen people to prove what I say. I have but just now got back from Taxminster, where I learned the whole story, and where either of you may hear the same.'

There was a pause. We were all on our feet again now, bandying many words of explanation and inquiry.

The truth of what I said was in the main believed:

and at length I had the satisfaction of making the men shake hands then and there ; had the satisfaction, later on, of knowing that I had changed those bitter foes into fast friends, and that thus my trip to Malt Regis had not been quite an idle one.

RIVAL PALETTES.

THERE exists, and probably has existed for that indefinite but lengthy period spoken of as ‘nobody knows how long,’ an inexplicable controversy, an inexplicable rivalry between figure and landscape painters, often very bitterly expressed, nearly always very bitterly felt if not expressed. There have been diatribes from the latter against the injustice which gives the first place always in criticism and in the hanging of exhibitions to the former, who have treated all such assaults with a contempt more stinging than any defence could have been ; or, if they or their partisans have condescended to answer the landscape-painters, it has been by declarations to the effect that the public care nothing about landscape, and that they pass the very best specimens by with a brief remark to spend a quarter of an hour over a very mediocre figure-picture—that it requires far more natural talent, severer study, a contention with greater difficulties, and an acquaintance with altogether a higher class of sensations and sentiments, to produce a first-rate figure-picture than it does to produce a first-rate landscape.

In private life there is a sort of tacit understanding frequently between the two classes not to discuss the

relative merits of their calling, for fear of giving rise to acrimonious arguments, and, if a figure-painter be asked to criticise a group of trees, or a stretch of moor, or sea and sky upon his rival's easel, he will say, 'It is of no use asking me, I know nothing about landscape; I can't advise you; but it seems to me very pretty, or very fine,' &c.

Few will commit themselves to an opinion, not appearing at all ashamed to confess their ignorance, or to assume it, in order to take shelter under it. On the other hand, the landscape-painter fights shy of criticising a group of nymphs or cavaliers, 'he does not profess,' he says, 'to understand much about such subjects;' or if one or other of the limners unguardedly expresses an adverse judgment upon the picture in question, it will be said, 'O, he is only a landscape-painter, what does he know about flesh or drapery?' or, by the same token, 'Pooh, what do figure-painters pretend to give opinions on mountains and lakes for?'

So, as we say, the antagonism both in public and private, tacitly or outspoken, is kept alive, and, as we think, much to the prejudice of the interests of art.

Now, it is our desire here briefly to examine the item or clause in this controversy put forth by the figure-painters, viz. that the study of their specialty is fraught with more difficulty than that of their rivals. There is much to be said about the unworthiness of this same rivalry, and how it appears to us that all art and artists ought to be in perfect accord and harmony, that dissension is annihilative to their progress, and

that whether a painter studies from the face of Nature or from the face of the paid model, no acrimonious contention as to who is dealing with the nobler subject should disturb their unanimity. And farther, it may be very cogently urged, that each has much to learn from the other, as is proved by the fact that, with few honourable exceptions, a perfectly satisfactory combination of landscape and figures on one canvas has seldom been achieved—either the figures kill the landscape, or *vice versa*. One is always subservient to or interfering with the other, and this same combination would therefore appear to be one of the rarest of an artist's attainments. In this circumstance, perhaps, may lie some reason for the rivalry, some reason for the indifference, real or assumed, of the *figuriste* for the landscape, and of the *paysagiste* for the figure.

It is our province, however, as we have said, first, to consider the question at issue: Who acquires his material from which to build his complete and perfectly thought-out picture with the greater facility? Who has to contend with the larger number of barriers to success? Who, in a word, can get the facts he wants to paint from, and having got them, portrays them with the more ease? And which facts cost the greater labour, patience, and endurance to accumulate and deal with?

To our thinking, the figure-painter in his studio, 'with all appliances and means to boot,' working away from his model, from his drapery carefully adjusted upon the lay-figure, or from any of the objects of so-

called still-life necessary for the subject in hand, everything being perfectly under his control, and placed in exactly the light he desires, shut out from wind and dust and sun, and from all intrusion, knows not a tenth part of the hindrances to quiet study which surround the landscape-painter in the field. Given an equal mechanical ability to paint, that is to represent what is before him, and it will be found that the obstacles to doing so, with the fullest power, are so numerous and of such a temper-trying description out of doors, that from the very beginning the denizen of the studio must have the best of it. He has to deal with no fleeting effects; he can take his time; he can coax and cajole his material to his will with the utmost deliberation; he can go through successive stages and methods of painting; he can give time for varnish or water to dry; and if he fails to satisfy himself, he can scrape or sponge out, and recommence without any sensation of hurry or fear that what he wanted to portray will vanish.

On the other hand, the luckless wight seated on his sketching-stool out of doors must be prompt in his decisions, rapid in his execution, dexterous to a degree with his brush and colour, and perfectly indifferent to the vagaries of the weather, to the impertinence or curiosity of passers-by, to the thousand-and-one annoyances incidental to the exercising a delicate brain and handicraft in the open air, and moreover must call upon his memory for what he wants to an extent utterly undreamt-of by the figure-painter.

The most beautiful arrangements of light and shade, the most glorious effects of colour and form, the most to be coveted tones and shapes of sky and clouds, with the corresponding alterations they bring about on hill and dale and sea and wood, are always the most transitory, and of course, therefore, the most difficult to catch.

At the same time in the day, and in the same sort of weather, Nature will often repeat, in some degree, her own effects and combinations; but she will never do this so precisely that the artist can rely on it in every detail, and at the best these repetitions will be but refreshers to his memory.

Purple shadow or golden gleam, blood-red sunset or silvery dawn, vary, shift, and disappear, even as they are gazed at; and, without an exquisitely retentive memory, cultivated by long practice to the highest pitch, nothing really great can be done in landscape, whereas the figure-painter can get on fairly well with a very much less acute recollection of objects. He has but to raise his eyes from his canvas, and behold! what he wants is before him; or he has but to order it in, be it animate or inanimate, and he need not draw upon his memory at all.

Brief or copious notes, rapid jottings, blurs, and unsatisfactory blots of effects and colour—only serving to remind their author of what he means, incomprehensible sometimes to every one else—are frequently the sole tangible stock-in-trade, out of which the landscape-painter evolves his most important pictures, and

miles have to be trudged, perhaps, and all sorts of adverse circumstances of travel and wandering encountered, even to obtain thus much of paltry-looking materials. The figure-painter knows literally nothing of this hopeless-looking kind of work ; his early studies of the skeleton, the muscles, the antique, and the life, will each bear an appearance of completeness more or less satisfactory as far as it goes ; and it must therefore surely be conceded, when all these circumstances which we have touched upon are borne in mind, that he is somewhat wrong in asserting that it is only in the pursuit of his branch of the art that real difficulties are met with ; surely wrong in saying that it is easy work to paint a landscape, and that the only artist properly so called is he who deals with the human form and face divine ! Whilst, therefore, not at all agreeing with him in this, at the same time we are quite prepared to admit that it is too much the habit with the delineators of the beauties of the outer world to devote themselves too exclusively to them, to neglect far too much the study and portrayal of the figure, just as it is too much the habit of the figure-painters to paint always in their studios, and never to set up their easels in the open air ; they should each believe that they both lack qualities possessed by the other, that on either hand much is to be learned both in and out of doors. Force, freshness, brilliancy, sunlight, and a host of more valuable if not indispensable qualities can only be attained by study in the field, whilst care, accuracy, delicacy, downright rigid adherence to facts, and sheer

power of painting can hardly elsewhere be acquired than in the *atelier*.

If, as in all rivalries, concessions could be made on both sides, this one would cease of course, and we should have a class of picture more constantly brought before us, which as we have suggested we now find only on very rare occasions, viz. the perfect combination of landscape and figures. There will be specialties in every profession, but when this is the case, at the sacrifice of all acquaintance, or with but a very *slight* acquaintance, with other branches of the same profession, there is surely something wrong. The physician is not ignorant of surgery, though he does not practise it; he could amputate a limb on an emergency. And it would be possible for a Chancery bar barrister on an equal emergency to defend a murderer at the Old Bailey. All doctors have had a certain amount of training in the dissecting-room; most lawyers are deeply read in all the walks of their calling (especially is this the case on the Continent); but we fear there are dozens of clever figure-painters who never made a sketch of a landscape out of doors in their lives, as there are dozens of landscape-painters who never made a study from the life or the antique, far less the skeleton; who could not draw or paint a moderate-sized figure thoroughly well if their existence depended on it, any more than their rivals (if we must call them so) could render a sunset at sea, or the effect of a passing shower upon a mountain-side. In the face therefore of such facts, is it not the merest folly to assert that he

who can draw and paint the human frame perfectly can, upon that basis alone, draw and paint anything? a folly which verges upon impertinence if it is stretched, as we have heard it, so far as to say that he is the only artist who can paint landscape at all!

Folly, too, is it to dispute about the first place—to dispute about which are the greater painters! Neither can be considered quite perfectly trained without a more complete blending of the studies. A thorough artist ought to be able to paint anything, and if pre-eminence is given to figure-painters solely because the unthinking public prefer gazing upon humanity to trees and skies, then are they elevated not upon any superior merit of their own, but simply upon the ignorance of the multitude. It does not make figure-painting a worthier or higher pursuit than landscape, merely on account of its exciting greater interest and admiration; on the contrary it has been said that the best things are not necessarily the most popular, and clearly it does require a keener appreciation of art *per se* to understand the merits of a good landscape, than the story told by an assemblage of human beings on a canvas.

Most people look for and can make out the subject of a group of figures, before they begin to question the artistic merits of the picture; and a great deal of very bad painting will be accepted for the sake of a popular story, sentiment, or sensation. The human interest attaching to figure subjects can be grasped by a very large multitude, whereas earth, air, and water, portrayed ever so deftly, will only appeal to a comparative few.

[illegible]

It is not long in many years the landscape will have been considered at the hands of the painter. We have so many fine pictures of the country as there were in the past season and it may be an augury of the future. There is a great deal of the magnates at the two opposing factions and it is a consummation

1822 He was ~~regarded~~ no landscape-painter
 1823 ~~and~~ ~~was~~ ~~not~~ ~~admitted~~ of the Royal Academy,
 1824 ~~and~~ ~~was~~ ~~not~~ ~~considered~~ worthy of that
 1825 ~~honour~~ ~~and~~ ~~was~~ ~~not~~ ~~admitted~~ to assert, that some
 1826 ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~best~~ ~~landscapes~~ ~~were~~ ~~kept~~ ~~out~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~

• Written in the spring of 1874.

cold, whilst more than one comparatively obscure figure or portrait painter was lifted into the Academic body. There is no knowing to what extent these facts stimulated, if not all but created, the antagonism referred to, and the art of landscape-painting in oil in a measure began to die out; for wearied and heart-sickened by long-continued fruitless attempts to get justice done them, and their works fairly placed in the Annual Exhibition, a troop of the best-known landscape artists gave up painting in oil entirely, and went over to one or other of the water-colour societies, where they were gladly welcomed, and where their drawings instantly received the consideration they deserved. Men, who until they adopted this course were scarcely earning bread and cheese, forthwith were recognised as painters of infinite powers, and commanded large prices for their works. People said that landscape art was only to be seen to advantage at the 'Old Society,' or the 'Institute,' or the 'Dudley Gallery;' that there was a dearth of oil-painters in that branch of the calling; and truly, for a considerable time, scarcely a landscape of any importance was to be recognised on the line at the Royal Academy.

Only as younger men began to grow up, and 'hope rose eternal' in their very human breasts, was there to be seen a revival of landscape in the more powerful medium, and the mutation of time having brought about changes in the imperious forty, an inclination was shown by them to recognise its claims. After a while a landscape and figure painter was elected an Asso-

ciate, one of those rare geniuses (now unhappily dead) who *did* combine both elements; then a landscape-painter, pure and simple, was allowed a seat on the Academic benches; and quite recently, another artist, whose skill in dealing with landscape and cattle combined is notorious, has also been dignified by the magic initials, A.R.A.

Hence, in conjunction with the circumstances already alluded to of the large number of first-rate representations of outdoor nature, well hung in the Exhibition of '78, and the fact that many of their producers have run well in the periodical race for Academic honours, and may therefore be expected to come successfully to the front in future competitions, we repeat there is a favourable augury for the cessation of the strife we are condemning.

In thus advancing a plea for the professors of landscape, we would not have it supposed that the figure-painter in the pursuit of his branch of the art has a path of roses to travel. We are quite mindful of what is demanded from him simply in the carrying out of his work: of how the mere confinement to the studio in fine weather is, of itself, a disagreeable necessity, which a landscape-painter is all but exempt from; of how expression is an item which he must draw largely upon his own imagination for, it being only possible for the best of models to assume partially, whilst sitting, a look of joy, sorrow, anger, cunning, surprise, or whatever may be required; of how any strong action likewise can be but little more than indicated by the living

figure, or freed from hardness or awkwardness if the lay-figure be too much relied upon.

The composition or putting together of many living figures is not often possible to any extent in the studio; they have to be dealt with one by one, and of course the whole, seen as a whole, can but exist in the painter's mind; whereas it may be urged that a faithful landscape artist at least sees his picture before him, subject though it is to continuous change.

Whilst conceding these and many more drawbacks to the pursuit of figure-painting (never supposing for a moment that it is not fraught with an infinitude of difficulties), we are merely protesting that they are not by any means confined to this branch of the art; and when all is said and done for both sides, we still incline to the belief that the landscape-painter on the whole has the most to contend with. Any way, the obstacles met with by each but differ in kind rather than in degree, and that they should form a bone of contention, and create the rivalry we have been referring to, is most earnestly to be deprecated.

AT BETTWS-Y-COED.

‘In a deep vale, shut out by Alpine hills from the rude world,’ stands the cluster of whitewashed and slate-roofed cottages known as the village of Bettws-y-Coed.

There is perhaps no spot in the whole district of North Wales more thoroughly picturesque or completely adapted for the head-quarters of the landscape-painting fraternity than this little hamlet, situated on the once busy high-road to Ireland.

Until Telford, the engineer of the Georgian days, cut his way through this mountainous region, one may guess that it was about as unfrequented (save by the Cymrian peasantry) as any part of the principality; and a journey—say from Shrewsbury to Holyhead—to any one bent on the shortest cut to the sister-island, would literally have been beset with more difficulties, not to say dangers, than would now be met with in a passage across the Rocky Mountains.

Without for a moment indorsing the assertions of the local guide-books, that ‘the scenery is quite equal to Switzerland,’ or countenancing the unscrupulous way in which they magnify the general proportions of the country, we are nevertheless aware that in bad weather,

without a guide, with but a faint apology for roads, and with the scantiest population, understanding none but their own language, an ordinary traveller might as easily come to grief amongst the hills of North Wales as in any country of a similar character. Every adventurous pedestrian amongst mountains, large or small, will admit this; and even now, with all the traffic of the tourising multitudes which flock here in the summer and autumn, we not unfrequently hear of accidents, more or less serious, arising purely out of the conformation of the land.

The construction, therefore, of such a road as we can now bowl over from Llangollen to Bangor was a work of infinite value. It robbed the torrents, mists, and snow-drifts of more than half their old obstructive powers, and enabled the gallant fours-in-hand of the period to penetrate the mountain fastnesses with as much ease as they passed through the smiling meadows of Hertfordshire and Lincoln.

When Telford's Menai bridge, by linking Anglesey with the mainland, put Dublin into closer communication by some hours with London, the triumph of engineering skill must have seemed to be complete. But this result has scarcely been attained, free communication through the heart of North Wales has scarcely been effected, the wildest and most inaccessible regions have scarcely been made to resound with the post-horn and life set palpitating through this artery of civilisation,—when, hey, presto! up springs steam, with its iron highway and tubular bridges, and Telford's hard

work and genius goes comparatively for nothing. All the bustle and activity called into existence by the engineer's talent along his enterprising route once more subsides, and the Royal Oak at Bettws-y-Coed, and its kindred hostelries and villages, relapse—save but for the pleasure-seeker and the artist—into the dull obscurity of the ante-Telfordian epoch.


But for the artist; ay, but for him! But this is a 'but' of considerable importance. Not much dullness, not much obscurity, can any place retain, in this second half of the nineteenth century, where *he* sets up his Lares and Penates; and he has no more important stronghold than this little Welsh hamlet.

Here, therefore, from the first promise of spring till the winds and frosts of November have once more bared the branches, flock in countless numbers the votaries of the palette and easel. Here spring up, in every direction, little encampments more or less permanent; from the well-constructed little wooden hut down to the portable and, if it may be so called, ephemeral white umbrella. Here pictures and sketches are produced with an earnestness and determination highly commendable, and gratifying to all who have anything like a feeling for the beautiful in Nature. Here innumerable pipes are smoked, sometimes even round camp-fires, where the literal as well as the artistic 'pot' is frequently made to boil; and here is led a life, the delights of which can hardly be sung in too joyous a key. No, not much dullness or obscurity for 'Betsy Code,' as it has been called, while this jolly, jovial,

happy crew keep high jinks amongst its winding valleys and rushing streams.

The roads no longer echo with the hoofs of the rattling teams of the good old coaching days; the tourist conveyance of the hour is but a sorry apology for the Bangor and Holyhead mail. Salmon cannot be taken out of the Lledyr or the Conway now, but there is plenty of trout, and excellent good cheer for all who care to make a halt by the side of Telford's route, which, if no longer serving its original purpose, is of the greatest value as a means of enabling our painters to familiarise us with the beauties of Taffy-land.

As our clean-shaven, smug-chinned grandfathers journeyed along this road, on their way to or from Ireland, the sight of an artist sketching in these districts, it may be opined, was a rare occurrence; and it is very doubtful whether, even if these worthy gout-subjected old gentlemen had caught sight of one, from their outside seats on the Holyhead mail, they would have quite understood what he was at. It is curious to think how they would have shaken their wise pates, and, at the very least, have looked upon him from under their long-eared travelling-caps, and from out the swathes of their wrappers and neckcloths, as some vagabond, tramp, or gipsy, up to no good. How they would have attributed to him all sorts of felonious intentions, by no means indirectly connected with the highway, and which astute ideas would have been inevitably confirmed, had there been any display on his part of hirsute tendencies. His easel and apparatus



would probably have been considered as mere blinds, by which they, knowing old dogs that they were, could not be taken in. The bare idea of a man following an honest and worthy career by such gimcrack proceedings would at once have been scouted, even if the real purpose of the work in hand had been in any way comprehended; for then sketching or painting from Nature was an occupation as little followed as driving four-horsed stage-coaches is now. Apart from the widespread knowledge and love of art, and the consequent increase of numbers in the landscape-painter's ranks which marks the present time, the thousand-and-one facilities now offered for this most delightful pursuit were then almost unknown.

Leaving out of the question such temptations as the rapid transits to the finest scenery at home or abroad, and the large prices now obtained for pictures, the inducements to work out of doors were not great.

The non-portability of the artist's paraphernalia must in itself have been a sad barrier to his enjoyment, even if his love for Nature was sufficient to bring him into the field for the purpose of diligent, deliberate, and conscientious study.

Every engraving or pictorial record of artist-life at that period confirms this. Oil-colour is always shown as the material in use; water-colour, never.

Notably there was one, entitled 'Time and Tide wait for no Man,' comically representing the misfortunes of an enthusiast sketching on the sea-shore, who, unconsciously overtaken by the tide, is sitting in front

of an enormous easel, surrounded by his numerous and ponderous traps, in bulk sufficient apparently to fill a small wagon. Doubtless the details and properties are historically correct, having been drawn from the materials in use at the period. We are thus enabled to deduce the exact condition of the artist's requisites some years back, and we have only to contrast them with any of Mr. Punch's illustrations of his own artist at work in the country, to see the change which a few decades have made in these respects alone.

When the mail-guard's horn used to awake the echoes of the Conway valley, water-colouring was absolutely in its infancy. In fact, colouring is a misnomer, for it was little more than toning, that followed the careful delineation, in neutral tint, of all the objects in the drawing, and this was rarely considered necessary, or even attempted, as a way to truth, on the spot. The high perfection to which this art has attained, the capabilities of the material, the immense patronage bestowed upon it, the multifarious channels for its exhibition, in the shape of 'Old Societies,' 'Institutes,' and 'Dudley Galleries,' would have been as little believed as the possibility of steam enabling us to travel beyond the rate of twelve miles an hour.

When we were boys a box of water-colours, or rather a 'paint-box,' as it was called, was an awe-inspiring and magnificent fabric, at least to the juvenile mind. As big as the family Bible or mamma's work-box, of splendidly-polished mahogany, kept strictly under lock and key, and teeming with recondite recesses, drawers,

slides, trays, and compartments, it begot a respect and an admiration never to be forgotten. And the contents too!—think of the contents! China palettes curiously partitioned, glass cup for water, camel's-hair brushes, pencils, reed pens, and a pair of compasses; a stick of Indian ink with mysterious gilt hieroglyphics, wrapped in silver paper; gold shell ditto; a piece of sponge; and, finally, a dozen or more of the hardest of hard cakes of colour, stamped on the under side with their name and that of their maker, and on the upper with his sign or crest.

The delicately printed name of each colour was also stuck under each separate cell for the cakes, whilst in the inside of the lid you might behold a gorgeous and emblazoned account of the goods dealt in by the manufacturer. Enriched and surrounded by emblematical scrolls, and representations in gold upon a black shiny ground of easels, palettes, and brushes, suggestive of a painter's 'Valentine' in mourning, it excited our keenest interest, whilst a pin dropped in to secure the drawer, and a covering of green baize or velvet on the bottom of the box gave the finishing touches to this casket of priceless worth.

With an apparatus like this, which it must be admitted was not altogether convenient, portable, or well adapted for rough handling and knocking-about work in the open air, it is not extraordinary that our forefathers should have been so little tempted by the charms of sketching; and when it is remembered that no usable colour could be obtained except by pertina-

cious rubbing up of the cake on the palette, it ceases to be remarkable that water-colour painting was generally looked upon as an amusement or profession necessarily followed within doors only. Truly, a few obscure but adventurous spirits—such as David Cox, Turner, De Wint, Crome, and Copley Fielding—do appear to have made the best of such materials as were at their command, and have left behind them two or three drawings which, despite the introduction of moist colours, and all the like modern improvements, seem hard to beat.

Nevertheless, as mankind will for ever rush after things which are supposed to save trouble, there may be found in these same modern appliances cogent reasons for the popularity of sketching and painting as an outdoor pursuit; reasons which, as have been stated, are apart from the increased development of art as a branch of education. Glance at the wonderfully tempting appearance of our artist colourmen's establishments. Look at their wares, at those delightful trim-made blocks of rough drawing-paper, their neat covers, with the pockets for the sketches when made; at those compact little portable japanned tin boxes and their glittering moist colours; at the bottles of Chinese white; the morocco-leather brush-cases; the exquisitely-made sable brushes themselves, in the gigantic goose-quills, or in the little silver-plated end to the ebony stick; the water-bottle with its screw-top, and cups which fit over it, or hook on the side of the palette, which is formed by the folding of the colour-box itself. Glance at the military-

looking havresack, destined to contain these delights, and then at the camp-stools, the seats, the folding easels, the tents, and white umbrellas, and if you have a spark of latent love for painting, you will be inclined to half ruin yourself in this fascinating emporium, and instantly be seized with an insane desire to rush off to Bettws, to the Highlands, to Switzerland, or the Thames, establish an encampment, and set to work like a madman.

In oil-painting, likewise, not less are the advantages nowadays offered to the artist bent on conscientious labour in the field. When Gainsborough, and still later Constable, painted out of doors, if they ever did, their paraphernalia must have been quite as unmanageable as the drawing-room water-colour box just referred to.

Collapsible tin tubes were unknown, the artist himself had frequently to grind and mix his own colours, or if purchased ready for use, they were handed to him in little fragile bladder bags, which had to be untied, and retied, whenever their contents were required on the palette, and which oozed and squirted, or cracked and squashed all over his fingers and clothes.

When one thinks of what gratuitous trouble all this must have given, how it must have added to the difficulties, quite great enough in themselves, of rendering justly the beauties before them, it is not wonderful that so little, but rather that so much, of what we now understand as truth, was obtained by the landscape-painters of former times. The conventional brown

tree, the foggy skies, the smudgy water, the old woman in the red cloak, of the Wilson School, can thus be readily accounted for ; for indeed it may be supposed, broadly speaking, that nothing but a few sketches in pencil, sepia, or Indian ink, were ever made on the spot, and consequently that it was only the men of the truest genius, and extraordinary memories like Turner's, who ever shone out at the time, or have left anything like a reputation behind them. They triumphed over all the disadvantages by which they were surrounded ; they left their mark as genius will ever do, in spite of all obstacles.

The mere luxury of material and appliances could not then, as now, induce men of moderate calibre to do battle with Nature on her own ground ; consequently the struggle was never entered on ; the weapons did not, as at present, foster, if not create, a certain range of artistic prowess.

So, then, to this little Welsh valley, more perhaps than to any one other paintable spot on the globe, flock in hundreds, the genial, jovial, happy brethren of the brush. Here David Cox established his head-quarters ; for years and years he came as regularly as the seasons. A great pioneer, he showed the way, not only how to treat the scenery, but how to find it and labour at it. He set the fashion and made the place one of the most celebrated in England in the landscape-painters' annals ; the very crags overhanging it are known by his name. He painted the sign for that pleasant little hostelry, the Royal Oak, in the days when he first found it out,

a humble roadside inn, and now, alas ! no longer recognisable in the recently completed large modern hotel, with its adjacent railway station.

Affording, though it may, ample barrack accommodation for the annual invasion of the peaceful army of art, with its camp-followers of tourists and excursionists, this building is nevertheless lamentably incongruous and annihilative of the picturesque, to say nothing of the possible subversion by its luxuries of the rude discipline which has ever been so essential to the efficiency of the maul-stick battalions.

A railway station, too, at Bettws-y-Coed ! What would poor David say to such an outrage on his familiar haunts, could he look down upon them ! It does seem horribly barbarous to cut and scar those pretty valleys with inclines, embankments, and tunnels ; to bridge over its streamlets and mock its miniature impediments with fresh-looking bricks and mortar, and to scare the kingfisher and the heron by the scream of a steam whistle, all for the sake of putting this most uncommercial little place some one hour or so nearer to the great iron network. Surely the old highway was good enough for its modest requirements.

The present Waterloo Hotel is also of comparatively modern date ; but when we first knew the place it was even less pretentious than its rivals, the Royal Oak and the Swan, and stood quite close to the iron bridge erected and named in commemoration of the great victory when Telford made the road. Humble or luxurious, however, the quarters have been, and are always

amply filled during the sketching season, as many a tourist must have found to his inconvenience.

Here, too, Creswick has often studied with earnestness and devotion, and pressed into his service many a detail for a great deal that has delighted us for the last twenty years. Here he got much of the feeling and many of the facts which have helped to make him the graceful painter he is ; and an educated eye, whilst feasting on the beauties of the Bettws district, would instinctively recognise the originals of the portraits of many a group of elm, ash, and oak, thatched roof, water-mill, or lichen-dotted arch, which from time to time it had gazed upon in Trafalgar-square. Even so recently as in the last Royal Academy Exhibition, his picture of 'The Bend in the River' is a proof of how inexhaustible, even with his experience, he considers the resources of the locality.*

From Capel-Curig to the Conway falls, from far up the Lledyr valley, or away towards Llanrwst, east, west, north, and south, during four or five months of the year, there is not a picturesque point, not a spit of shingly river-bed or boulder-stone, or rustic ivy-clad bridge, the bridge that 'makes a hoary eye-brow for the stream,' that has not its group of diligent disciples of Cox or Turner, Creswick or Birket Foster, labouring away heart and soul to portray the rural glories that have enticed them to the scene.

'This is the right gate that leads down to show the waterfall,' according to the Welshman's notice-board,

* Written in 1863.

near the approach from the high-road to the 'Swallow Falls,' or, in the crack-jaw language of the country, the 'Rhaiadr-y-wennol.'

If we trust to it, we shall not have gone far before we have an indication that one or more of the fraternity has settled himself in the most available position to get a peep of this tumbling water—this water, doing all, if not more than Southey said it did at Lodore. The neighbouring Pandy Mill, the most often painted, perhaps, of any of the water-wheels in North Wales, or in the entire world, will be simply encompassed by a whole flock of diligent limners.

If we glance over the parapet of the picturesque Pont-y-Pair there are certain to be at least a dozen umbrellas within our range; close to the bridge, at the side of the bridge, underneath the bridge, even with the bridge, looking up at it, down at it, away from it, and towards it, the painters teem in every direction.

Following the course of the Llugwy to its junction with the Conway, they will still crop up on all sides: under the bowering hazels which shut it in, and make a green and leafy avenue for its silver way, or where it broadens into a flashing fordable lake; by the stepping-stones, or at the 'waters' meet,' the cry is still, 'We see them!'

Again, ascending towards the junction of the Lledyr, another tributary of the Conway, and bringing into sight the bold and almost Alpine form of Moel Siabod, tents, umbrellas, or evidences of even more flying encampments, still continue.

The mysterious, fairy-haunted, deep defile of For Snothern, the subject of Creswick's diploma picture, when he was elected Royal Academician, does not deter the persevering painter from establishing himself in the very midst of its enchanted solitudes.

The roaring cataract made by the Conway itself yet farther up its rocky wood-enshrouded passage is surrounded usually by a whole company of skirmishers from the invading legion.

Farmhouses far off from even bridle-ways, high cliffs, by-lanes, and most sequestered dales, are subjected to its inroads. In a word, '*rien n'est sacré pour l'artiste peintre*' in these parts, be he the diligent pre-Raphaelite besieger, sitting down for weeks before the beleaguered subject of his choice, or the wandering, dashing 'free brush' scouring the country-side and filling his portfolio to bursting in a month with valuable spoil, the result of his raids upon the picturesque.

LEAVES BY A LISTENER.

Rambling.

As a professed listener, I am fain of course to attribute what some people may think undue advantages to ears ; and although I do not presume to exalt them under all circumstances over eyes, I would at least put them on a par, adding that I have known the ears of many folks to be of infinitely greater use than the eyes of others. The longer I live, therefore, the more am I convinced that of all appendages to the human frame, ears are the most valuable, and that, properly used, they convey as great an amount of correct and trustworthy information to the brain, as do eyes.

What Leigh Hunt says with respect to the latter organs, and how men avail themselves, or not, of what they can teach, may be applied with equal force to the former. He points out that people may walk through a crowded city and see nothing but the crowd ; and 'that a man may go from Bond-street to Blackwall, and, unless he has the luck to witness an accident or get a knock from a porter's burden, may be conscious, when he has returned, of nothing but the names of those two places, and of the mud through which he has passed.'

In the same way he may be unconscious of the noise and rattle of the great thoroughfares, and fail to separate, or invest with any interest, the different component parts which make up the hum of the mighty city, and, unless an explosion happens, or somebody gives a shrill whistle in his ear, he may fail to note the existence even of any sound whatever. It is quite possible to be as inattentive with ears as with eyes, and a man who is what is called 'absent,' is usually so with both. The genial author just quoted refers, when, on this subject of 'Eyes and no Eyes, or the Art of Seeing,' to the children's story so entitled, where it is shown that two lads, returning from a ramble over the same ground, have utilised it in very different fashions. 'To one, there was only a heath, and a hill, and meadows by the water-side; to the other, the heath was alive with curious birds, the hill had the remains of a camp, the meadows abounded in reeds, and rats, and herons, and kingfishers, and sea-shells; he also saw that there was a man catching eels, with a glorious sunset behind him.'

Equally well could a similar story be told about 'Ears and no Ears, or the Art of Hearing,' and the moral to be drawn from the contrast between the hero who used his ears and the hero who did not would be equally striking, and would go far to establish my original proposition. Of course to the man who is so supremely self-occupied as to be independent of his senses I have nothing to say; it signifies little to him whether each, or any of them, is dulled or destroyed;

for this sort of individual, this sort of typical absent man, is usually just as indifferent to the offices intended by Nature to be served by his palate, his nose, and his fingers, as he is to those performed by his eyes and his ears. You may give him sour beer, or Cape port, without his knowing them from Bass's best, or Sandeman's '47, or hardly the one from the other. You may take him into a hot ill-ventilated room, and he will be just as comfortable as if he were in a rose-garden; and he will carry off your umbrella, with a knob for the handle, in lieu of his own, with a hook, without being aware, by the touch, of the difference. This questionably happy temperament is, at the same time, so hopeless, in my humble judgment, that I exclude it from all consideration in referring to the relative value of 'Ears and Eyes.' No! I must take for my example a being who is on the alert with all his senses; ready to make the utmost of them, under every condition; and then, I repeat, it will be found that ears have it, by several lengths. Rob him of his ears, and he will feel it to be the greatest disaster that can happen to him. Yes! I insist, greater than the loss of his eyes; for although the latter misfortune would render him to a vast degree dependent upon others, would debar him from the pursuit probably of most occupations to which he had been accustomed, and by which, maybe, he gained a livelihood, would affect, of course, as every great calamity must, the whole tenor of his life, yet I maintain that the real effect upon himself personally—that is, upon his innermost existence—would be less

prejudicial to his happiness and temperament, less hard to bear generally, than would be the deprivation of hearing. Ergo, ears come before eyes.

We need go no further for a proof of this than amongst the blind. Contrast them with the deaf, and we are all aware which are the happier. The very active sympathy extended to the first class of sufferers, and withheld from the second—a sympathy which shows itself in the constant disposition of everybody to help the sightless, while they avoid, as far as possible, the society of the deaf, from perfectly obvious, though selfish reasons, doubtless has some little to do with the respective results of the two misfortunes. This, however, is but another argument in my favour; and I do not despise it, although I base my position upon far wider ground, the ground that the intrinsic value to the brain of hearing is more important than that of seeing. Let the ears be properly used, and it is the blind man's own fault if he does not know pretty nearly as much as the rest of his fellow-creatures. Nay! I have met blind men quite as capable, and far more useful members of society, than some seeing ones. I have heard them explain and expatiate on the beauties of a picture with greater accuracy than those possessed of sight could explain the merits of an opera. Indeed, relying on my own experience, I believe the majority of people go to the opera more to use their eyes than their ears. They study music, as it were, by sight, just as I, and a few other superior folks, have occasionally studied painting by ear. An absurd idea this, no doubt, but

(meaning no joke) a sound one in the main ; for it is certainly better to live in darkness than in silence, and herein lies another proof of the superiority of ears to eyes, as shown by the blind *versus* the deaf. Yes ! it is very delightful and very needful to be able to distinguish sky from sea, and sea from shore, and it is very hard to be precluded from doing so ; but this is not so hard as to miss the sound of the plashing waves, the murmuring of the breeze, or the roll of the thunder. Mountain and meadow, river and road, tree and turret, are beautiful to contemplate, but, if they present to the mind, through the eye, nothing more than the broad facts of what they are, if their subtler interests and beauties are overlooked or disregarded, if their individual images are not impressed upon the mind, so as to be recognisable when revisited, or when reproduced in a picture ; if, in a word, they leave no more mark than did the heath, the meadow, and the river on the lad in the story, then I say that the ears which recognise to the full the exquisite melody of the nightingale's note, which can associate the wondrous teaching in the habits of the bee with his hum, can distinguish the chirp of the grasshopper from that of the cricket, and take home to the brain the full meaning and significance which are blended with such simple sounds, then, I say, the ears which can do this are more valuable organs than eyes, and I establish the assertion with which I started.

For my own part, I prefer my friends' voices to their faces ; I learn more from them, and there is as

great a variety in the one as in the other. I prefer the sound of their footfalls to the sight of their boots ; I prefer the tones of an orchestra to the aspect of a fiddle. Be attentive with, and train your ear, and there is no necessity for you to look out of window to ascertain if the vehicle pulling up at the door be a brougham and pair, or a hansom cab ; and the footstep on the stair should tell you who your visitor is as plainly as the sight of him would do. You can hear if it rains as readily as you can see, and, if you are not out of doors to feel, you must appeal to your ear to know if it blows. Each noise in the streets possesses as much individuality as is identifiable, and says as much to the brain as all the varieties of sights which meet the eye. Have we but the attention to listen, have we but ' the art of hearing,' we shall discover an equal amount of instruction and food for reflection in the ' roar of London ' as in the aspect of the metropolis. The infinitely varied character of every individual and creature we meet ; of every vehicle, building, monument, thoroughfare, open space, street corner, and river-side we pass, does not exceed that of every sound that greets the ear.

Nor is the case changed if we transport ourselves to the country. The very silence there is as significant to the mind, speaks to it as plainly, creates as much emotion, as the rattle and clatter of the town ; and when anything occurs to slightly disturb the general stillness, it is far easier to distinguish its cause. Sounds there do not usually overlap each other without intermission ; every facility is there afforded for sepa-

rating one from the other ; but, being all more or less gentle or soft, the ear must be on the alert to catch them. Otherwise there is great risk of our presenting a parallel to the aforesaid hero of the story, who merely saw a heath, a hill, and meadows by the water-side ; and we shall be saying, ' There is nothing to listen to,' as he said, ' There was nothing to see.' We shall fail to detect the difference between the gentle rustle of the reeds, when stirred by the wind, or when they are set shivering by the proceedings of the water-rats. We shall not mark the difference between the twitter of the hedge-sparrow and the pipe of the redbreast, the chirp of the wren and the note of the goldfinch. Corncrake and rook, nightingale and blackbird, hooting owl and croaking frog, bellowing bull and lowing cow, baa-ing sheep and bleating lamb, will be alike indistinguishable the one from the other by our dull ears. The farm, too, will remain a blank ; and turkeys or geese, guinea-fowls or peacocks, cochin-chinas or bantams, and every-day cocks and hens will all apparently create much the same sort of sound.

More than half the charm of country life is lost, if no heed be paid to the rough music of such things ; and, rambling as I am, in this pleasant autumn weather, through ripening cornfields, or bosky lanes, by the side of rippling streams, or broad flowing river, across rolling downs, or by ' the sad sea waves,' I can but wonder how men live that do not listen.

Stretched here, upon a breezy headland, or there, beneath the shade of oak and elm, I find a tuneful har-

mony encircling me, without which my mind would starve. I can close my eyes, or pull my wide-awake across them, and yet remain in close commune with all about me. There is no sound but what evokes its corresponding picture ; and the circumstance or scene thus conjured up at once is mirrored upon the retina of the mind's eye. The pattering of the squirrel, in his scamper through the leafy maze above, bringing down a tiny shower of twigs and leaves at every bound, is quite sufficient to make me realise immediately his marvellous agile pranks. The twitter of the birds (to say nothing of their songs) is companionship, without which the place might be a desert, and the feathered minstrels become to me quite visible. The soothing rustle of the stems of wheat reveals the golden, waving, undulating field, spread out beneath the 'blue, unclouded weather ;' and the murmur of the

'Murmuring surges, that on the unnumbered idle pebbles chafe,'

displays, as I listen, a vision of the glorious, ever-changing sea. The sluicing of the water against the river's bank gives token, as readily as any sight of it could do, of the never-ceasing hurry of the stream, as it strives to meet the ocean. Wander by the brook-side, and surely you can tell, as you listen, if boulder stone or pebbly strand impede its progress. Current and eddy, still pool, or rushing torrent, are all surely distinguishable by the ear. If a fish rises, or a swift skim the surface for his dinner—from the strain of the soaring lark, to the splash of the diving kingfisher, you

may trust your ear for information as soon as your eye. Divest any one of these incidents or sights of their legitimate accompaniment of sound, and you shall divest them of half their beauty. Stop your ears, and open your eyes, and you will find it less agreeable than doing the reverse. No better proof can be found of the relative value of hearing and seeing. For then the squirrel's movements excite less admiration, the flight of birds is meaningless, the waving corn looks dull and heavy, and one of the great glories of the sea most certainly is gone; Nature, in a word, seems mute and dreary, while a sense of pain lays hold upon us, similar to that we feel when in presence of the deaf and dumb. Again, in plying the oar, or the flail, in guiding the team over furrow or road, in the saw-pit, or with the hatchet among the saplings, in tending the flocks and the herds, in digging and delving, the noises which man or his doings bring about in rural places, have all a worth and wealth of meaning which we could but ill forego. Think of the merry whirr of the farm-boy's rattle, as he shouts and whoops to scare the birds from off the corn; think of the tinkling sheep-bell, of the joyous peal from the village church, as it is borne upon the evening breeze; of the 'deep-mouthed baying' of the watch-dog at the distant hall; of the ringing strokes of the hammer at the blacksmith's forge, and say if each and all of such sounds do not invoke the presence of pleasant thoughts, inspiring us with tender, homely, peaceful feelings, producing pictures of simple life, most soothing and healthful to contemplate.

Memories, too, of bygone days, of places, people, and events, are readily summoned back to us by echoes such as these; indeed, more readily (save, perhaps, by the sense of smell) than by any other appeal to our senses; and if this be but a melancholy advantage, it is one which deals so gently with the past, that only good can come of it. After the turmoil of London life, what more soothing than to listen to 'the sighing of a summer sea, asleep upon a sandy shore;' or, as Keats says:

'O ye whose ears are dinned with uproar rude,
Or fed too much with cloying melody,
Sit ye near some old cavern's mouth and brood,
Until ye start as if the sea-nymphs quired.'

Or, again, hearken to the thousand mysterious cracking, rapping, humming, buzzing little noises, which break upon the stillness of the woods. If there be not balm for an over-taxed or troubled brain to be found in such music, then I must give you up; if you fail to find consolation in the utterance of the 'tongues in trees,' then my philosophy is of no avail. That there are still grander, more serious and important emotions to be reached and stirred through the medium of the ear, I will not attempt to enforce in any words of my own, but use some which I overheard not long ago, and which seemed to fit in most sympathetically with my estimate of the value of sound. 'What man in thoughtful mood can walk forth in the still and quiet season of autumn, and tread upon the seared grass, that is almost painfully audible to the serious emotions of his

heart, and listen to the fall of the leaf, that seems, idle as it is, as if it were the footstep of some predestined event, and hear the far echo of the hills, and the solemn wind-dirge of the dying year, and not meditate in that hour—and not meditate upon things above the world, and above all its grosser cares and interests? “The dead, the loved, the lost,” will come to him then; the world will sink like a phantom-shadow, and eternity will be a presence, and heaven, through the serene depths of those opening skies, will be to him a vision.’

Unpleasant, horrible, or dreadful sounds? Why, yes; of course there are, plenty; as there are unpleasant, horrible, and dreadful sights; but I opine that there are fewer of the former than of the latter; or any way, they affect us less, and we can generally escape them sooner. The whirr and clatter of machinery, the scream of engines, and the usual racket indigenous to the busy haunts of men, if they fatigue and jar upon the nervous system, linger less long in the mind than the sight of a blood-stained stretcher passing through the streets, or any other result of ‘accident by flood or field.’ The shriek from an agonised human being, or the piteous cry from a suffering dumb animal, will ring horribly in the ear for days after we have heard it, I grant, but less long than the sight of wounds will do.

How often is a plain face made charming by a gentle winning voice! Yet the most superbly beautiful countenance will never counteract the unpleasant effect of grating or of strident tones.

It is from estimating thus highly the art of hearing, I suppose, which has made me the good listener I profess to be ; and if what I have said be substantially true with regard to the value of correct, sensitive, and highly trained ears, in connection with commonplace sounds, it must be doubly so when applied to music ; for although it is as possible to study music by sight, as I insist it is to study painting by ear, I nevertheless freely admit it is better to reverse the proceeding. When we come to the question of music, it is assumed that we are all listeners, therefore it is quite unnecessary to dilate on the advantage of ears when we find ourselves in the presence of a fine orchestra or accomplished vocalist. I have been but striving to show how much may be lost, if we limit our listening to such times only.

For those, alack ! who, if they do not keep their ears open, have no other direct road to the brain, for the blind, in fact, music necessarily becomes a much more important matter than one of mere pleasure. The delight of listening to melodious accents must be of course intensified a thousandfold if there be nothing to distract the mind through the eye ; but it is with regard to music as an occupation or pursuit that I mean it is of more importance to the blind than to the seeing, for upon no other ground can a blind man find himself on equal terms with a seeing one, upon no other ground can he compete with him with a fair chance of equal success. He cannot be taught to make brushes and brooms, or baskets and mats, as readily as a man with

his eyes, he can never turn out as skilled a workman or be capable of producing with equal facility and rapidity. Hence he enters the market unfairly weighted, and he must be more or less dependent, according to his means, upon charity for his support. Train him, however, to become a good musician, and if proper measures be adopted, there should be no more difficulty in teaching a sightless child who has a natural capacity the rudiments, theory, and practice of music than his unafflicted playmate; give him a sound musical education, and if he have a voice, he can sing as well without his eyes as with them, and his fingers will not be one whit the less dexterous in their movements upon the keys or strings of an instrument because he cannot watch their gyrations. Grant this, and it will be obvious that a channel of lucrative employment for the blind is at once opened, and which is afforded by no other means. As a listener I feel competent to assert that most concert singers, instrumental performers (especially organists, teachers of music, and tuners of pianos) could get on, as far as their profession is concerned, nearly as well without their eyes as with them. I have not, therefore, been surprised to hear lately that in Paris about thirty per cent of the male pupils in the blind schools graduate in music, and are able to maintain themselves fully, and that at Boston, U.S., about forty per cent of all the pupils, male and female, succeed in earning a good living as teachers, tuners, and organists.

But I have been most marvellously surprised at the

same time to learn that in England the percentage is little more than one. Is this because we are not a musical nation, and are not apt learners of music? Nothing of the kind. Such absurd last-century ideas have surely long been scattered to the winds, as the appreciative patronage we bestow upon the best productions of the musician's art, and the numerous excellent professors we turn out must prove. No! it is simply because the teachers of music to the blind do not adopt the best and surest available means of imparting instruction, or else perform their duties in so perfunctory a manner as to lead to scarcely anything more than the doubtful advantages obtainable by a little public-house fiddling. Now, it may safely be assumed that a natural capacity for music will be found to a larger extent among blind than among seeing children; and why, when it is so found, it should be neglected because a child happens to be blind passes comprehension. Why, in the name of all that is reasonable, should the education of a blind child, in any foundling or orphan school, be less thorough than that which would be bestowed upon a seeing one, who might show signs of a musical taste? For, be it understood, the education which I am referring to as leading to such desirable results as I hear of in Paris or America, must be very thorough indeed, must take a long time, and cannot but be expensive, yet time and money should be of no consideration to the State, or charity, in such a matter. Nor would any investment in the long-run be likely to turn out more profitable; for not only is the mind of

an afflicted human being elevated, refined, and shielded against relapsing into a despondency (a most natural consequence, if to the loss of sight be added the loss of independence and the absence of occupation), but the State, or charity, is relieved finally from farther claim upon it.

Music is now everywhere made a prominent item in all schools, public, private, or charitable, and in the latter, if large, there is usually a band of well-trained instrumentalists, whose members, as they are launched into the world, have no difficulty in earning a good living. As a listener, of course I am an inquirer, and I would ask those whom it may concern whether I shall ever have my ears tickled, and my heart warmed, by the melodious strains of an orchestra composed of the blind.

FINGERS VERSUS EYES.

OF all 'the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to,' there is none, perhaps, which so directly appeals to our sympathy and pity as blindness. Nor is this without reason; for it is scarcely possible to conceive any affliction which, not absolutely prostrating or paralysing the human frame, so completely realises the idea of 'death in life;' no affliction which seems to place us so completely at the mercy of others, or renders us so dependent upon the love and affection of those nearest and dearest to us for every act and want of daily life. Whether the calamity of blindness is more keenly felt by those who have never known the blessing of sight—by those who, as the phrase goes, have been born blind—or by those on whom the affliction has fallen after a series of years passed in the full enjoyment of the beauties of creation, it is difficult to say. It depends, doubtless, a great deal on temperament. It can be urged that we could not miss that which we have never known; and that therefore he who has never seen a star may treat with indifference the vaunted glories of the heavens, of which he hears so much; and yet the man who has been blind from his cradle—scarcely any are ever actually born blind—must surely have far fewer

sources of reference than he who is acquainted, though it be only through memory, with the aspect of 'things as they are.'

It is surely better that part of a life should have been passed in the full possession of one of God's greatest gifts than never to have known it. The homely axiom, that 'half a loaf is better than no bread,' may be applied here; and although it may be 'truth, the poet sings, that sorrow's crown of sorrow is the remembrance of happier things,' in a few years, more or less, the unhappy sufferer will in a measure get reconciled to his fate, or at least submit to it with resignation. Then, whilst drawing upon his recollection of past experiences, he will find them surely of more avail, even though they be mingled with many a pang of regret, than if he had for ever been shut out from undergoing them. Eventually therefore, when time shall have passed, he comes to be only in the same position of him who has never seen the light, with the advantage of a knowledge of *what it is*.

His *real* suffering has been the *going* blind, not the *being* so; but this suffering it is almost impossible to exaggerate. It would be hopeless to attempt to picture the agony of mind induced by this heartrending and terrible condition. The misery of him upon whom the mists have gradually or suddenly descended in middle life would seem, if we think about it, to be without parallel. Nothing, surely, can exceed the calamity of a hale strong man, in his prime and vigour, with all his schemes, hopes, and ambitions teeming with interest,

and hourly yielding profitable fruits, to be suddenly brought to a stand-still, pulled up in his sturdy march through life, and placed perhaps at the disposition of a little child; to find every moment of his existence, every onward step he takes, every wish, trivial or important, no longer under his own control, but under that of his guide or helpmate; to feel that he is bound down, shackled, and imprisoned more thoroughly than the veriest convict, to whom the idea of escape or release must seem near and probable, when compared with the fate of the prisoner shut in by an impenetrable pall of life-long darkness. How is it possible adequately to describe the desolation of heart which inevitably overtakes a man when he first realises the fact that the outer world, with all its shapes and hues of beauty, is lost to him for ever? that, save in the changing sensations from warmth to cold, the seasons will be for him all alike? that he can never again bask in the loving tender glances of wife and child, nor enjoy the hearty kindly greeting beaming in the face of his old friend? How describe his despondency on feeling that for the future he is shut out from every enjoyment except such as reach him through the ear? that society is no longer anything but a fanfare of sound, and that new acquaintances and friendships, identifying themselves through the medium of a hand-grip or of voices only, present to his mind but a series of vague and indistinct images? When first the dense curtain descends, he must feel that existence henceforth can be to him but one long night, and that each earnest

thought, hope, aspiration, and plan that has hitherto filled his life must be as though it had never been ; all would appear to be a hopeless blank, and truly then may it be said, ' the dark hour is upon him.'

Truly, indeed, this is suffering—keen, severe, and terrible—a suffering far greater than the actual blindness. The wrench is, the relinquishment of his former life and the struggle to accept the new conditions imposed on him ; but the mind once made up to the necessity of these, and an apprenticeship served to them, it matters little, after a while, whether one has been blind for twenty or for forty years.

When so long a period has expired, it matters little whether one has gone through all this suffering, with its melancholy compensation of mental pictures of things as they used to be, or whether, from the very earliest days, ' wisdom, at one entrance, has been quite shut out.' The fact exists, that whether by accident or by natural causes, early or late in life, the sight has been lost, the blind man must remain a more or less helpless creature, deserving the utmost consideration and assistance which his *seeing* brethren can afford him. No one would question their readiness to give him this ; and the numberless charities and benevolent combinations having *him* for their especial object attest it.

Nevertheless, it is a question, and one which is daily pressing itself more urgently on the minds of the philanthropic, whether there is not a great lack of organisation in the systems by which, in various ways, it is sought to ameliorate his unhappy lot. It were an

endless task to point out all the requirements of a blind man; but it must be obvious to every one that his chief resource, and that which is most likely to keep him from sinking into a hopeless state of despondency, is mental occupation. It is popularly supposed, and not without reason, that Nature endeavours to compensate for the loss of one sense by giving preternatural acuteness to others. At any rate, from the necessity felt by the blind man of relying entirely upon sound or touch to convey an impression to the brain, the very practice of these senses, undisturbed by any ocular aid, doubtless sharpens them in a degree. That the mind can give more undivided attention to what reaches it through the ear when the eyes are shut, is daily shown by watching any thoughtful man when his intelligence has to be concentrated. What more common than to see him with his eyes fixed on the ground, or with one hand shielding them from the light and distraction of surrounding objects? The act of listening is evidently assisted by this process. We evidently can *hear* better, because of the concentration of the mind on the sense of hearing; not perhaps because the sense in itself is actually more acute, although with the blind long practice, as we have said, may render it so to some extent. However this may be with regard to the sense of hearing, certainly it is manifestly so with that of touch; for when it has to be appealed to constantly for information, it is quite wonderful to observe how sensitive the fingers will become. Practice here, obviously, is of the greatest use. Therefore it is not surprising

to find that the blind resort as naturally and with the same alacrity for the examination of an object to the sense of touch, as the seeing do to their eyes. Clearly, then, here is a point on which the utmost assistance should be given to the sightless; and it is just on this point that we think little or nothing comparatively has hitherto been done for them in England by their seeing and benevolent sympathisers.

It is in the hours which a blind man, whatever his position in life, must sometimes pass alone that the sense of his helplessness must be most apparent to him, and when consequently his despondency is likely to be the greatest. Then it is that he stands most in need of mental occupation. With no one perhaps to read to him, with nothing indeed around him that can reach his brain through his ear, he obviously feels about with his fingers for something to do. What, then, at such a moment so fitting to put before him as a book, which with his fingers he shall be able as readily to decipher as his more fortunate friends with their eyes? If he be rich even, and can afford the advantage of a regular attendant, secretary, amanuensis, guide, reader, whatever you call him, the sense of independence conferred by his ability to do this for himself would be an immense satisfaction, and go far to destroy the idea of being shut off by his calamity from habits common to the seeing. But if the sightless man be poor, his chances are very few and far between indeed of getting any one to read to him as a continuous source of pleasure and profit; and his feeling of isola-

tion thus intensified, he must constantly be left for hours and hours together, 'to wear out his life in shapeless idleness,' unless he can read for himself.

Now hitherto, although there are, as everybody knows, books with embossed forms especially manufactured to meet his want, there has been, curiously enough, no universal language for him—not even a universal alphabet; and unless he chances to have the books within his reach of the precise system which he may have been taught to read, he would be as incapable of deciphering a single word as the most uneducated peasant.

Should this state of things exist? and will not many a reader be surprised to learn that it does? When we throw a copper to the luckless mendicant seated on Waterloo-bridge, or in any other nook or corner in our vast thoroughfares, pretending to fumble out the 'Gospel according to St. John' with his fingers from the huge embossed volume on his lap, how many of us know or suspect that there are in England half a dozen different languages, so to speak, in which the Bible is printed for the use of the blind? Yet such is the case, and, broadly speaking, amongst the chief of the many impediments which this fact throws in the way of the education and general mental culture of the sightless, it renders the literature so narrow in its range and so expensive to acquire, that, until it is altered, we can safely assert that the well-being of the blind in this matter is all but entirely neglected. When we consider how, more than in any other class of the commu-

nity, reading is essential to their happiness, it appears almost scandalous to think what little facility is given them for learning even an alphabet that shall be of any use—that is, of the universal use that an alphabet once learned is of to those who can see. With 30,000 people in the British isles who from their very affliction, as we know, evoke the utmost pity from all sorts and conditions of men, it is surely time that a national effort should be made on their behalf; and with this view an association has been formed, in the hope that by constantly impressing this fact upon the public, and eventually upon Parliament, a more humane condition of affairs may be brought about. The work is not easy, and the aspirations of those connected with it may be utopian; but already it has achieved an amount of success which a few years ago was thought to be out of the question.

This society proposes, first and foremost amongst the many objects it has in view regarding the welfare of the blind, to establish, if possible, one universal and national system of embossed literature; so that if a blind child be educated, say, at Bethnal-green, it should, on migrating westward to Belgravia, be able to read the books in use at any school or institution in that district, which at present it could not do, for the simple reason that the sufferer would find himself confronted by an embossed literature to all intents and purposes printed, to him, in a foreign language. If he should have been taught upon Frere's system, it will not aid him one jot in deciphering Moon's, Lucas's, Alston's,

Braille's, or Haüy's, and, of course, *vice versa*. All these systems have their advocates, and all have many merits, yet there are none but what are susceptible of improvement; and the association hopes that, by collecting available evidence from the intelligent blind using them, to be able to come to a decision as to which is best adapted for general use, and then, by attempting to perfect *that one*, render its adoption inevitable, to the exclusion of the rest.

The qualifications which are to enable this body to settle the important question, and arrive at a just decision, are several-fold. The members of the executive council, in the first place, must be themselves all blind, or so far so as to render them incapable of reading by sight. In the second, they must have no pecuniary interest in any of the existing systems; and, in the third, they must be practically acquainted, or be willing to acquaint themselves, with at least three of the different methods. It is thus hoped that something like a sound basis of action will be established; for who so competent to judge of the requirements of the blind as the blind themselves? and what occupation more genial to blind men of education and leisure—such as are the gentlemen forming this committee—than endeavouring to assist by every means in their power the welfare and mental cultivation of their fellow-sufferers?—an occupation which their affliction renders them singularly competent to undertake, while it unfits them for almost every other. Indeed, to the fact that up to the present time legislation for the blind has been con-

ducted, with but few exceptions, by those blessed with sight, is to be attributed the imperfect state of existing arrangements. Alphabets and systems have been invented and adopted which, seeming to meet all the requirements of the eye, are supposed therefore to be equally favourable to the touch; and a more fundamental mistake it would have been impossible to have fallen into. Obvious as most of the evils arising from the existing conflicting systems must be to everybody whose attention is drawn to the subject, and upon the chief one of which great stress has been laid in what has here been written, there is yet another almost as important: it is the waste of money entailed. Five or six types for printing the Bible are now necessary, where one should be sufficient; and consequently very little else of any importance is printed, on account of the immense outlay. Narrowed in this way, the literature for the blind affords comparatively no temptation to them to make much practical use of their ability (if they have any) to read by touch, or even to practise sufficiently to read with a facility which shall render the occupation thoroughly welcome; nay, or even to learn to read at all. Any one of an indolent disposition can now take shelter under the plea that there is nothing to read, even when he has learnt to do so, except the Bible, and that this he knows by heart. Charity is thus scattered and wasted, whereas, if it were concentrated and made to flow in one channel, and that channel leading to a sea of universal literature, there really should be no more reason, startling as the assertion

may at first appear, why a blind child should not be taught to read with its fingers as easily as a seeing one with its eyes.

So much, and much more to the same effect, then, may be said with respect to 'reading for the blind;' and if this sounds surprising, how far more so will the statement, that there exists at present in England absolutely no system worthy of the name by which the blind can be taught to write, so that they themselves can read what they have written, and correspond easily one with the other! Still such is the case, and this in the face of the existence of a plan universally in use in most of the principal cities on the continent of Europe, and in a modified form on that of America, but which has never found favour here amongst the legislators for the blind. Utter supineness is the only explanation to be found of this neglect; for the system is at once so simple and ingenious, that a knowledge of it can be acquired in a day, and absolute practical use made of it by practice in a month. This is not the place to describe it in detail; but in passing we may say that it is called 'Braille's dotted system,' and is the invention of a French gentleman of that name. To expatiate on the advantages which, in addition to being able to read for himself, a blind man would find in being able to write for himself, so that he can refer at any moment to ideas which he set down as they struck him, and which would most likely otherwise be lost, is quite unnecessary, after what has been pointed out already.

Music too is shamefully neglected as a means of

affording a most congenial and remunerative occupation for the sightless; and this is chiefly owing, again, to the want of an easy method of notation, and one which can be written and read by the pupil. Scarcely anywhere on the continent either of Europe or America is there a people so behindhand in this respect as we are; whilst in many cities—Paris, Brussels, and Boston, U.S., to wit—there are blind musicians employed both as teachers and pianoforte-tuners, who make always a good, and sometimes almost a handsome, income by their art. They have in most instances been thoroughly educated to this end, by the aid of Braille's dotted system of musical notation, in the institutions for the blind established in those cities; and when we remember how limited are the occupations to which the sightless can turn for remunerative employment, it is really pitiable to know that, here in England, many a blind man who, properly trained from his youth, could have been made a good musician, and so placed above want, is now entirely dependent on charity for his support, or at best is only earning a scanty subsistence at some such rough handicraft as basket-, mat-, or brush-making.

With reading, therefore, in the distressingly-confused state we have shown it to be, with no available system for writing, and with but a poor apology for instruction in music, surely the want of an association for reforming the benighted condition in which the unfortunate sufferers from blindness have so long remained, must be felt; and although the efforts of the

one in question will mainly be directed towards the mental and educational parts of the subject, it does not mean to confine itself to them, but, if possible, to establish a sort of central court of reference and appeal on all matters connected with the employment and general welfare of the blind.

Inventions, suggestions, appeals, and a host of items of this kind, are constantly turning up from benevolent and energetic sympathisers—many good and useful, and others utterly worthless, but all requiring examination. These could then be dealt with by intelligent men, acting in concert, and with but one aim, in a way impossible under any other conditions, and to the saving of suffering, time, and money. Surely the existence of this association has only to be widely known to meet with the assistance and coöperation which the whole seeing community is only too ready at all times to afford to individual sufferers from the sad calamity of blindness.

It may be added, that the executive council has already begun its labours, and that it has most successfully introduced the use of Braille's dotted system into many institutions for the blind throughout the country.* It therefore hopes that the time is not very far distant when, with the aid and sympathy of the public,

* During the seven years which have elapsed since this article was written, great progress has been made by the British and Foreign Blind Association, for promoting the education and welfare of the blind, in the work it has undertaken; and the Braille system is becoming universal. The head-quarters of the Association are at 33 Cambridge-square, W.

blind people may be taught to write to one another, and to become thorough proficient in the art of music. This latter result, so peculiarly available for them as a means of livelihood, is only to be brought about, the council believes, by means of Braille's dotted system of musical notation; and the council holds it to be of the utmost importance that schools professing to give instruction in music must adopt this system, if they would conscientiously carry out the duties they profess to undertake.

THE END.

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